

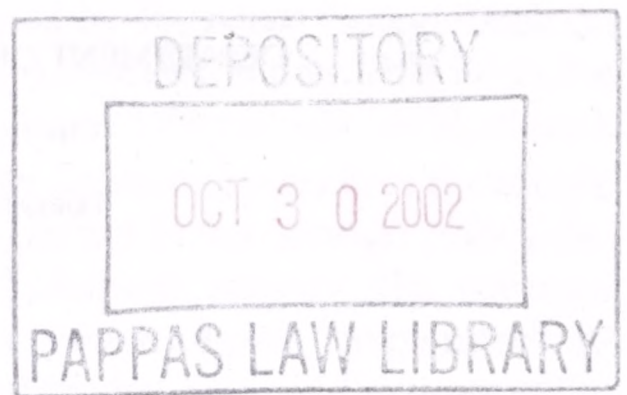
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Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968

Volume V

Vietnam 1967



Editor

Kent Sieg

General Editor

David S. Patterson

DEPARTMENT OF STATE PUBLICATION 10958

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Preface

The *Foreign Relations of the United States* series presents the official documentary historical record of major foreign policy decisions and significant diplomatic activity of the United States Government. The Historian of the Department of State is charged with the responsibility for the preparation of the *Foreign Relations* series. The staff of the Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, plans, researches, compiles, and edits the volumes in the series. Official regulations codifying specific standards for the selection and editing of documents for the series were first promulgated by Secretary of State Frank B. Kellogg on March 26, 1925. These regulations, with minor modifications, guided the series through 1991.

A new statutory charter for the preparation of the series was established by Public Law 102–138, the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1992 and 1993, which was signed by President George Bush on October 28, 1991. Section 198 of P.L. 102–138 added a new Title IV to the Department of State’s Basic Authorities Act of 1956 (22 USC 4351, *et seq.*).

The statute requires that the *Foreign Relations* series be a thorough, accurate, and reliable record of major United States foreign policy decisions and significant United States diplomatic activity. The volumes of the series should include all records needed to provide comprehensive documentation of major foreign policy decisions and actions of the United States Government. The statute also confirms the editing principles established by Secretary Kellogg: the *Foreign Relations* series is guided by the principles of historical objectivity and accuracy; records should not be altered or deletions made without indicating in the published text that a deletion has been made; the published record should omit no facts that were of major importance in reaching a decision; and nothing should be omitted for the purposes of concealing a defect in policy. The statute also requires that the *Foreign Relations* series be published not more than 30 years after the events recorded.

Structure and Scope of the Foreign Relations Series

This volume is part of a subseries of volumes of the *Foreign Relations* series that documents the most important issues in the foreign policy of the 5 years (1964–1968) of the administration of Lyndon B. Johnson. The subseries presents in 34 volumes a documentary record of major foreign policy decisions and actions of President Johnson’s administration. This volume documents U.S. policy toward Vietnam in 1967. Volumes I–IV cover Vietnam from 1964 through 1966; volumes VI and VII will present documents from 1968 through January 1969.

Focus of Research and Principles of Selection for Foreign Relations, 1964–1968, Volume V

The editor of the volume sought to present documentation that illuminates responsibility for major foreign policy decisions in the U.S.

Government, with emphasis on the President and his advisers. The documents include memoranda and records of discussions that set forth policy issues and options and show decisions or actions taken. The emphasis is on the development of U.S. policy and on major aspects and repercussions of its execution rather than on the details of policy execution.

President Lyndon Johnson relied upon his principal foreign policy advisers, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, Special Assistant Walt Rostow, as well as many other official and unofficial advisers, for advice and recommendations on policy for Vietnam. The editor tried to document this broad policy process of recommendation, discussion, and the final decisions by the President. While the volume's principal focus is on Washington policymaking, a secondary focus is on events and policy repercussions in South Vietnam.

The volume covers a broad range of topics and themes, the foremost of which is the U.S. effort to explore a possible negotiated settlement of the war. There is in-depth coverage of the major unsuccessful peace initiatives, Sunflower and Pennsylvania to the North Vietnamese and Buttercup to the National Liberation Front, as well as less detailed coverage of other peace initiatives thought at the time by U.S. policymakers to be less promising. Another major theme of the volume is the military intensification of the war effort to force the enemy to accept a peace settlement. The Presidential decisions to intensify the bombing campaign against North Vietnam and the long debate and final compromise decision by Johnson to augment the level of U.S. forces in Vietnam are part of this theme. The problem of U.S. domestic support for the war is another theme, as the Johnson administration grappled with building anti-war pressure. During the period covered by the volume, the Johnson administration named a new Ambassador to Vietnam, Ellsworth Bunker, put Robert Komer in charge of pacification and rural development, and then engaged in an effort to encourage reorganization and reform of the South Vietnam Government. This campaign, which had mixed results, is another main theme.

Documents in the volume also cover the South Vietnamese presidential elections, especially U.S. concerns about lack of unity between the two military contenders for the presidency. Another focus is the debate within the U.S. intelligence community over the size of the enemy in South Vietnam, the so-called "order of battle" controversy. During 1967 the administration conducted a reassessment of the war, a continuing theme of U.S. Vietnam policy, which resulted in advice to the President to stay the course.

Editorial Methodology

The documents are presented chronologically according to Washington time or, in the case of conferences, in the order of individual

meetings. Memoranda of conversation are placed according to the time and date of the conversation, rather than the date the memorandum was drafted.

Editorial treatment of the documents published in the *Foreign Relations* series follows Office style guidelines, supplemented by guidance from the General Editor and the chief technical editor. The source text is reproduced as exactly as possible, including marginalia or other notations, which are described in the footnotes. Texts are transcribed and printed according to accepted conventions for the publication of historical documents in the limitations of modern typography. A heading has been supplied by the editors for each document included in the volume. Spelling, capitalization, and punctuation are retained as found in the source text, except that obvious typographical errors are silently corrected. Other mistakes and omissions in the source text are corrected by bracketed insertions: a correction is set in italic type; an addition in roman type. Words or phrases underlined in the source text are printed in italics. Abbreviations and contractions are preserved as found in the source text, and a list of abbreviations is included in the front matter of each volume.

Bracketed insertions are also used to indicate omitted text that deals with an unrelated subject (in roman type) or that remains classified after declassification review (in italic type). The amount of material not declassified has been noted by indicating the number of lines or pages of source text that were omitted. Entire documents withheld for declassification purposes have been accounted for and are listed by headings, source notes, and number of pages not declassified in their chronological place. All brackets that appear in the source text are so identified by footnotes.

The first footnote to each document indicates the document's source, original classification, distribution, and drafting information. This note also provides the background of important documents and policies and indicates whether the President or his major policy advisers read the document.

Editorial notes and additional annotation summarize pertinent material not printed in the volume, indicate the location of additional documentary sources, provide references to important related documents printed in other volumes, describe key events, and provide summaries of and citations to public statements that supplement and elucidate the printed documents. Information derived from memoirs and other first-hand accounts has been used when appropriate to supplement or explicate the official record.

The numbers in the index refer to document numbers rather than to page numbers.

Advisory Committee on Historical Diplomatic Documentation

The Advisory Committee on Historical Diplomatic Documentation, established under the *Foreign Relations* statute, reviews records, advises, and makes recommendations concerning the *Foreign Relations* series. The Advisory Committee monitors the overall compilation and editorial process of the series and advises on all aspects of the preparation and declassification of the series. The Advisory Committee does not attempt to review the contents of individual volumes in the series, but it makes recommendations on problems that come to its attention.

The Advisory Committee has not reviewed this volume.

Declassification Review

The Information Response Branch of the Office of IRM Programs and Services, Bureau of Administration, Department of State, conducted the declassification review of the documents published in this volume. The review was conducted in accordance with the standards set forth in Executive Order 12958 on Classified National Security Information and applicable laws.

The principle guiding declassification review is to release all information, subject only to the current requirements of national security as embodied in law and regulation. Declassification decisions entailed concurrence of the appropriate geographic and functional bureaus in the Department of State, other concerned agencies of the U.S. Government, and the appropriate foreign governments regarding specific documents of those governments.

The final declassification review of this volume, which began in 1998 and was completed in 2002, resulted in the decision to withhold about two-tenths of one percent of the documentation proposed for publication; no documents were withheld in full. The minor excisions were made to protect intelligence sources and methods. Such information is exempt from declassification under Executive Order 12958. The issue of U.S. covert support for certain electoral candidates in South Vietnam and the covert support of a political party to support President Thieu were appealed to a High-Level Panel consisting of senior representatives from the Department of State, the National Security Council, and the Central Intelligence Agency. The panel, established in 1998, determines whether or not a covert activity or other intelligence activity can be acknowledged in the *Foreign Relations* series. The panel arrived at a determination that resulted in the release in excised form of all of the appealed documentation. The editor is confident, on the basis of the research conducted in preparing this volume and as a result of the declassification review process described above, that the documentation and editorial notes presented here provide an accurate account of U.S. policy toward Vietnam in 1967.

Acknowledgments

The editor wishes to acknowledge the assistance of officials at the Lyndon B. Johnson Library of the National Archives and Records Administration, especially Regina Greenwell and Charlaine Burgess, who provided key research assistance. The editor also wishes to acknowledge the assistance of historians at the Central Intelligence Agency, particularly Scott Koch; the staff of the Center for Military History; Sandra Meagher at the Department of Defense; David Phelps at the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and the staff of the Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

Kent Sieg collected documentation for this volume and selected and edited it, under the supervision of Edward C. Keefer, Chief of the Asia and Americas Division, and David S. Patterson, General Editor of the *Foreign Relations* series. Rita M. Baker and Vicki E. Futscher did the copy and technical editing, and Susan C. Weetman coordinated the declassification review. Max Franke prepared the index.

Marc J. Susser
The Historian
Bureau of Public Affairs

September 2002

Johnson Administration Volumes

Following is a list of the volumes in the *Foreign Relations* series for the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson. The titles of individual volumes may change. The year of publication is in parentheses after the title.

- | | |
|--------|---|
| I | Vietnam, 1964 (1992) |
| II | Vietnam, January–June 1965 (1996) |
| III | Vietnam, July–December 1965 (1996) |
| IV | Vietnam, 1966 (1998) |
| V | Vietnam, 1967 (2002) |
| VI | Vietnam, January–August 1968 (2002) |
| VII | Vietnam, August 1968–January 1969 |
| VIII | International Monetary and Trade Policy (1998) |
| IX | International Development and Economic Defense Policy; Commodities (1997) |
| X | National Security Policy (2002) |
| XI | Arms Control and Disarmament (1997) |
| XII | Western Europe (2001) |
| XIII | Western Europe Region (1995) |
| XIV | Soviet Union (2001) |
| XV | Germany and Berlin (1999) |
| XVI | Cyprus; Greece; Turkey (2002) |
| XVII | Eastern Europe; Austria; Finland (1996) |
| XVIII | Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1964–1967 (2001) |
| XIX | Six-Day War |
| XX | Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1967–1968 (2001) |
| XXI | Near East Region; Arabian Peninsula (2000) |
| XXII | Iran (1999) |
| XXIII | Congo |
| XXIV | Africa (1999) |
| XXV | South Asia (2000) |
| XXVI | Indonesia; Malaysia-Singapore; Philippines (2001) |
| XXVII | Mainland Southeast Asia; Regional Affairs (2000) |
| XXVIII | Laos (1998) |
| XXIX | Part 1, Korea (2000); Part 2, Japan |
| XXX | China (1998) |
| XXXI | Central and South America; Mexico |
| XXXII | Dominican Crisis; Cuba; Caribbean |
| XXXIII | Organization of Foreign Policy; United Nations |
| XXXIV | Energy Diplomacy and Global Issues (1999) |

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Sources

Sources for the Foreign Relations Series

The *Foreign Relations* statute requires that the published record in the *Foreign Relations* series include all records needed to provide comprehensive documentation on major U.S. foreign policy decisions and significant U.S. diplomatic activity. It further requires that government agencies, departments, and other entities of the U.S. Government engaged in foreign policy formulation, execution, or support cooperate with the Department of State Historian by providing full and complete access to records pertinent to foreign policy decisions and actions and by providing copies of selected records. Most of the documents consulted in the preparation of this volume have been declassified and are available for review at the National Archives and Records Administration or the Johnson Presidential Library.

The editors of the *Foreign Relations* series have complete access to all the retired records and papers of the Department of State: the central files of the Department; the special decentralized files ("lot files") of the Department at the bureau, office, and division levels; the files of the Department's Executive Secretariat, which contain the records of international conferences and high-level official visits, correspondence with foreign leaders by the President and Secretary of State, and memoranda of conversations between the President and Secretary of State and foreign officials; and the files of overseas diplomatic posts. All the Department's indexed central files for these years have been permanently transferred to the National Archives and Records Administration at College Park, Maryland (Archives II). Almost all of the Department's decentralized office (or lot) files covering this period, which the National Archives deems worthy of permanent retention, have been transferred from the Department's custody to Archives II.

The editors of the *Foreign Relations* series also have full access to the papers of President Johnson and other White House foreign policy records. Presidential papers maintained and preserved at the Presidential libraries include some of the most significant foreign affairs-related documentation from the Department of State and other Federal agencies including the National Security Council, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Department of Defense, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The editor of this volume also had access to the records of the Department of Defense, key records at the Central Intelligence Agency, the intelligence records at the National Security Council, and the official records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Sources for Foreign Relations, 1964–1968, Volume V

In preparing this volume, the editor made extensive use of presidential papers and other White House records at the Lyndon B.

Johnson Library. The extensive Vietnam Country File within the National Security File represents the single most used collection. Among the other component parts of the National Security File, the Intelligence File provides information on U.S. interest and role in elections, and the Files of Walt Rostow are generally valuable for all topics related to Presidential interest and decisions. Memos to the President, Meeting Notes File, and National Security Council Meetings File all provided records of key decisions. A crucial file at the Johnson Library, outside of the National Security File, is the Tom Johnson Notes of Meetings, which provided invaluable records of key meetings that took place after July 1967. Other Johnson Library collections less cited but still with significant documents were the Paul C. Warnke Papers/John McNaughton Files and the Westmoreland Papers. The transcripts of President Johnson's recorded telephone conversations prepared by the editor add important depth to the record and constitute material never before released.

Second in importance only to the White House records at the Johnson Library were the central files of the Department of State. Those relating to the various peace initiatives, POL 27-14 VIET/SUNFLOWER, POL 27-14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA, and POL 27-7 VIET/BUTTERCUP, were of great value. Files relating to the elections in South Vietnam for President and then for the National Assembly are in POL 14 VIET S. Basic reporting and recommendations on important developments in South Vietnam were often put in POL 27 VIET S, the file reserved for military operations but used as a catchall. POL 15 VIET S and POL 15-1 VIET S contains important material on relations with President Thieu. Of the Department of State lot files, most of which are now at the National Archives, the files of Assistant Secretary of State William Bundy, Lot 85 D 240 and the Files of Ambassador at Large Averell Harriman, Lot 71 D 461, were the most useful.

Of the records of the Department of Defense, which are at the Washington National Records Center, the McNamara/OSD Files, FRC 330 71 A 3470, 330 72 A 0075, and 330 77 A 2468, were most useful. In addition, the records of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam at the Institute for Military History and the Westmoreland Papers at the U.S. Army Center for Military History were important. Harriman's papers at the Library of Congress Manuscript Division were the most useful private collection.

For intelligence issues, DCI (Helms) Files and the Files of DCI's Special Assistant for Vietnam, George Carver, at the Central Intelligence Agency, were important. The National Security Council's Intelligence Files provided invaluable records and papers submitted to the 303 Committee.

Almost all of this documentation has been made available for use in the *Foreign Relations* series thanks to the consent of the agencies

mentioned, the assistance of their staffs, and especially the cooperation and support of the National Archives and Records Administration.

The following list identifies the particular files and collections consulted in the preparation of this volume. The declassification and transfer to the National Archives of the Department of State records is in process, and many of those records are already available for public review at the National Archives. The declassification review of other records is going forward in accordance with the provisions of Executive Orders 12958 and 13142, under which all records over 25 years old, except file series exemptions requested by agencies and approved by the President, should be reviewed for declassification by 2003.

Unpublished Sources

Department of State

Subject-Numeric Central Files. See National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 59, below.

Lot Files. These files may be transferred to the National Archives and Records Administration at College Park, Maryland, Record Group 59.

INR/IL Historical Files

Active historical files of the historical file relating to covert actions and intelligence in Vietnam, maintained in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research.

INR/REA Files: Lot 90 D 99

National Intelligence Estimates and Special National Intelligence Estimates, 1952–1985.

INR/REA/SA Files: Lot 75 D 352

South Vietnam country files, 1968–1970.

INR/REA/SA Files: Lot 75 D 378

General South Vietnam files, 1962–1967.

INR/RSB Files: Lot 90 D 320

Soviet-Asia relations, 1965–1978.

National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland

Record Group 59, General Records of the Department of State

Subject-Numeric Indexed Central Files. The Department of State's subject-numeric system is divided into broad categories: Administration, Consular, Culture and Information, Economic, Political and Defense, Science, and Social. Within each of these divisions are subject subcategories. For example, Political and Defense contains four subtopics: POL (Politics), DEF (Defense), CSM (Communism), and INT (Intelligence). Numerical

XVI Sources

subdivisions further define the subtopics. The following were the most important files consulted for this volume:

AID (US) VIET S, U.S. aid to South Vietnam
DEF 4 SEATO, Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
E US-VIET S, economic relations, U.S.-South Vietnam
E VIET S, economic affairs, South Vietnam
E 12 VIET S, land reform, South Vietnam
FN 12 VIET S, balance of payments, South Vietnam
ORG SAIGON, organization and administration, Saigon Embassy
POL IT-US, political relations, U.S.-Italy
POL NOR-VIET N, political relations, Norway-North Vietnam
POL UK-US, political relations, U.S.-United Kingdom
POL US-USSR, political relations, U.S.-Soviet Union
POL 1 US-USSR, general policy, U.S.-Soviet Union
POL 1 VIET S, general policy, South Vietnam
POL 1-1 VIET S, contingency planning, South Vietnam
POL 7 GUAM, Guam meeting
POL 7 MEX, visits and meetings, Mexico
POL 7 US, visits and meetings, U.S.
POL 12 VIET S, political parties, South Vietnam
POL 15 VIET S, Government of South Vietnam
POL 15-1 US/JOHNSON, Head of State, the President
POL 15-1 VIET S, head of state/executive branch, South Vietnam
POL 15-1 VAT, correspondence and meetings with the Pope
POL 17 NOR CHICOM, diplomatic representation, Norway-China
POL 17 US-VIET N, diplomatic representation, U.S.-North Vietnam
POL 17 VIET N, diplomatic and consular representation, North Vietnam
POL 17-1 NOR-US, accreditation, U.S.-Norway
POL 23-9 VIET S, civil disturbances and revolts, South Vietnam
POL 27 US/HUMPHREY, Vice President's assessment of military affairs
POL 27 VIET S, military operations, South Vietnam
POL 27 VIET S/MARIA, cease fires, South Vietnam
POL 27-7 VIET S/BUTTERCUP, prisoner exchanges, South Vietnam
POL 27-7 VIET, prisoners of war, Vietnam
POL 27-12 VIET, war crimes, Vietnam
POL 27-14 VIET/ASPEN, peace negotiations code named Aspen
POL 27-14 VIET/AZTEC, peace negotiations code named Aztec
POL 27-14 VIET/BAMBOO, peace negotiations code named Bamboo
POL 27-14 VIET/CROCODILE, peace negotiations code named Crocodile
POL 27-14 VIET/KILLY, peace negotiations code named Killy
POL 27-14 VIET/LION, peace negotiations code named Lion
POL 27-14 VIET/MARIGOLD, peace negotiations code named Marigold
POL 27-14 VIET/NIRVANA, peace negotiations code named Nirvana
POL 27-14 VIET/OHIO, peace negotiations code named Ohio
POL 27-14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA, peace negotiations code named Pennsylvania
POL 27-14 VIET/REDSKINS, peace negotiations code named Redskins
POL 27-14 VIET/SUNFLOWER, peace negotiations code named Sunflower
POL 27-14 VIET/TULIP, peace negotiations code named Tulip
POL 27-14 VIET S, truce talks, South Vietnam
POL 30 VIET S, defections, South Vietnam
REF VIET, refugees, Vietnam
REF VIET N, refugees, North Vietnam

Lot Files. The Department of State Lot Files are the special decentralized files at the bureau, office, and division levels; the Executive Secretariat files, and the files of overseas diplomatic posts.

Bundy Files: Lot 85 D 240

Files of William P. Bundy as Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, 1964–1969.

Bunker Files: Lot 74 D 417

Files of Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, including telegrams, personal and presidential messages, and correspondence, 1967–1973.

Bunker Files: Lot 77 D 146

Files containing Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker's official and personal correspondence, speeches and statements, interviews, and briefing books, 1967–1973.

DS/IM Files: Lot 92 D 306

Telegrams transmitting the weekly reports of Ellsworth Bunker to the President, 1967–1973.

EA Files: Lot 71 D 10

Files on the Paris Peace Talks, 1966–1968.

EA Files: Lot 72 D 33

Background papers on Asia, 1967–1968.

EA Files: Lot 74 D 246

Records relating to the Paris Peace Negotiations on Vietnam, 1966–1973.

EA/ACA Files: Lot 69 D 412

Vietnam negotiations file, informally referred to as the "V" file, covering peace efforts by individuals, groups, and countries, 1964–1967.

EA/ACA Files: Lot 69 D 128

Files of weekly reports on Vietnam peace negotiations, 1967–1968.

EA/ACA Files: Lot 69 D 111

General Vietnam files, 1964–1966.

EA/ACA Files: Lot 69 D 277

Files on Vietnam peace negotiations organized by country and group, 1965–1967.

EA/VN Files: Lot 69 D 74

Briefing book on the Secretary of Defense's visit to Vietnam, July 1967.

EA/VN Files: Lot 71 D 31

Economic Files, 1966–1967.

EA/VN Files: Lot 71 D 87

North Vietnam and National Liberation Front/Viet Cong files, 1966–1967; prisoner of war files, 1964–1967.

XVIII Sources

EA/VN Files: Lot 71 D 88

Subject files for 1967 covering mostly administrative, political, defense, and social matters.

EA/VN Files: Lot 72 D 207

Files on the Manila Summit, the Clifford–Taylor trip to Southeast Asia, the Tet Offensive, 1967, and background material, 1964–1968.

EA/VN Files: Lot 72 D 219

Politico-military files of significant Vietnam war incidents, 1964–1967.

EA/VN Files: Lot 73 D 141

General files of the interagency Vietnam Working Group

EA/VN Files: Lot 73 D 461

Files on politics, defense, rural development, and elections in South Vietnam, 1967–1969.

EA/VN Files: Lot 74 D 51

Military Files containing the only record of the air war in Vietnam, 1963–1970.

EA/VN Files: Lot 75 D 167

Files on Vietnamese politico-military affairs and meetings and trips of senior U.S. government officials with Vietnamese and Asian leaders, 1963–1969.

EA/VN Files: Lot 75 D 303

Files relating to the Free World Assistance in Vietnam, 1963–1971.

HARVAN Files: Lot 93 D 82

Correspondence, telegrams, and records of meetings of the HARVAN (Harriman–Vance) mission to the Paris peace talks on Vietnam, 1968–1969, including background material on Vietnam peace negotiations, 1962–1969.

Katzenbach Files: Lot 74 D 271

Files of Under Secretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach, 1966–1969.

Kohler Files: Lot 71 D 460

Files of Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Foy Kohler concerning his discussions with Soviet Ambassador Anatoli Dobrynin, 1967–1968; discussions between Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, 1962–1968.

Komer Files: Lot 69 D 303

Files of Robert W. Komer, 1949–1969.

Rusk Files: Lot 72 D 192

Files of Secretary of State Dean Rusk, 1961–1969, including texts of speeches, miscellaneous correspondence files, White House correspondence, chronological files, and memoranda of telephone conversations.

S–AH Files: Lot 71 D 461

Files of Ambassador at Large W. Averell Harriman concerning Vietnam peace negotiating channels, 1967–1968.

S-AH Files: Lot 84 D 161

Trip files of Ambassador at Large W. Averell Harriman, 1966-1967.

S/S-Executive Secretariat Files: Lot 70 D 48

Miscellaneous Vietnam reports.

S/S-I Files: Lot 72 D 316

National Security Action Memoranda 1-371, 1961-1968.

S/S-I Files: Lot 72 D 318

National Security Council meeting memoranda and agenda, 1966-1968.

S/S-S Files: Lot 67 D 586

International conference chronologies and briefing papers, 1966-1967, including background for the President's Asian trip, Secretary of State Dean Rusk's Asian Trip, Ambassador at Large W. Averell Harriman's post-Manila Summit Trip, the Guam Conference, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization Council Meeting, and the Seven Nation Conference on Vietnam.

S/S-S Files: Lot 68 D 475

Official visit chronologies, 1967, including background material for visits by Prime Minister Harold Holt, Prime Minister Lee Kwan Yew, Prince Souvana Phouma, and Prime Minister Eisaku Sato.

S/S-S Files: Lot 70 D 207

Vietnam briefing books and reports, contingency studies, and background papers on negotiations, 1965-1968.

S/S-S Files: Lot 68 D 453

International conference chronologies and briefing papers, 1967-1968, including background material for the Vice President's East Asian trip, Ambassador at Large W. Averell Harriman's Near Eastern and European trip, and the President's visit to Australia.

S/S-S Files: Lot 70 D 48

Miscellaneous Vietnam reports and briefing books, 1949-1968, including briefing books on negotiating initiatives, Senate committee reports, and the Blueprint on Vietnam.

S/S-S Administrative History and Transition Books: Lot 69 D 217

Administrative history of the Johnson administration; foreign policy fact books for Republican candidates; transition books, 1968.

Record Group 84, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the United States

Saigon Embassy Files

Files of Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, 1967-1973

Record Group 200, Records of Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara

Record Group 273, Records of the National Security Council

National Security Action Memorandums

Lyndon B. Johnson Library, Austin, Texas

Papers of President Lyndon B. Johnson

National Security File

- Agency File
- Country File
- Head of State Correspondence File
- Intelligence File
- International Meetings and Travel File
- Files of Robert Komer
- Komer-Leonhart File
- Memos to the President
- Name File
- National Intelligence Estimates
- National Security Action Memorandums
- National Security Council Histories
- National Security Council Meetings File
- Files of Walt Rostow
- Files of Bromley Smith
- Special Head of State Correspondence File
- Un-arranged Files

Office Files of the White House Aides

- George Christian Files
- James R. Jones Files
- Harry McPherson Files

Special Files

- Meeting Notes File
- Office of the President File
- President's Appointment File (Diary Backup)
- President's Daily Diary
- Recordings and Transcripts of Telephone Conversations
- Transcripts of Meetings in the Cabinet Room

White House Central Files

- Confidential File
- Subject File
- Reference Files, Vietnam

Other Personal Papers

Clark Clifford Papers

George Elsey Papers

Morton Halperin Papers

Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings

William Jordan Papers

Dean Rusk Papers, Personal Appointment Books

Paul C. Warnke Papers, John McNaughton Files

William C. Westmoreland Papers

Central Intelligence Agency, Langley, Virginia

Colby Files, Job 80-M01009A

DCI (Helms) Files, Jobs 80-R1580R, 80-B01721R, 80-R01720R, 80-M01044A, 80-B01285A

DDI Files, Job 80-B01721R

DDO/ISS Files, Jobs 78-32, 78-06425A, 78-0064235A

Executive Registry Subject Files, Jobs 80-R51580R, 80-R01284A

SAVA (Carver) Files, Jobs 80-R01284R, 80-R012850R, 80-R01720R

Department of Defense

Official Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Southeast Asia Files, 1966-1968

National Security Council

Intelligence Files

Records of the 303 Committee

Subject Files, Vietnam

Washington National Records Center, Suitland, Maryland

Record Group 330, Records of the Office of the Secretary of Defense

McNamara Files: FRC 71 A 3470

Files of Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, 1961-1968.

OSD Files: FRC 71 A 4546, 72 A 2467, 72 A 2468

Subject Files of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1967

OSD/General Counsel Files: FRC 75 A 0062

Files on the Pentagon Papers.

OSD/OASD/ISA Files: FRC 71 A 4919

McNamara Vietnam Files: FRC 77-0075

Vietnam files of Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, 1961-1968.

Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Washington, D.C.

W. Averell Harriman Papers

National Defense University, Washington, D.C.

Andrew Goodpaster Papers

Lyman Lemnitzer Papers

Maxwell Taylor Papers

U.S. Army Center for Military History, Washington, D.C.

Creighton Abrams Papers

William Colby Papers

DepCORDS/MACV Files

Files of the Deputy for Operations and Revolutionary Development, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam.

Robert Komer Papers

Thomas Thayer Papers

William C. Westmoreland Papers

History File, History Backup, and COMUSMACV Message Files, 1964–1968.

U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania

Army Chiefs of Staff Collection

Creighton Abrams Papers

William DePuy Papers

Richard Gard Papers

Harold K. Johnson Papers

Bruce Palmer Papers

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Abbreviations and Terms

AAA, anti-aircraft artillery
AEC, Atomic Energy Commission
AFC, Armed Forces Council
ANZUS, Australia, New Zealand, United States
AID, Agency for International Development
Arc Light, code name for U.S. B-52 bombing strikes in Southeast Asia
ARVN, Army of the Republic of Vietnam
ASA, Association of Southeast Asia
ASPAC, Asian Pacific Council
Aspen, code name for U.S. peace negotiations through Swedish channels

B-52, U.S. Air Force strategic bomber
Barrel Roll, code name for U. S. air operations over northern Laos

C-130, U.S. Air Force transport plane
CAP, series indicator for outgoing White House telegrams; combat air patrol; combined action platoon
CAS, controlled American source
ChiCom, Chinese Communist
CIA, Central Intelligence Agency
CIDG, Civilian Irregular Defense Group
Chieu Hoi, Government of South Vietnam's repatriation program for the Viet Cong
CINCPAC, Commander in Chief, Pacific
CINCPACAF, Commander in Chief, Pacific Air Force
CINCPACFLT, Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet
CINCUSARPAC, Commander in Chief, U.S. Army, Pacific
CIP, Commercial Import Program
CJCS, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
CMC, Clark M. Clifford
COMUSMACV, Commander, U. S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
CORDS, Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development
COSVN, Central Office for South Vietnam (Viet Cong)
CTZ, Combat Tactical Zone

DAB, Democratic Alliance Bloc (South Vietnam)
Daniel Boone, clandestine U.S. Army-ARVN reconnaissance operations into Cambodian border areas
DCI, Director of Central Intelligence
DCM, Deputy Chief of Mission
Deptel, Department of State telegram
DIA, Defense Intelligence Agency
DMZ, Demilitarized Zone
DOD, Department of Defense
DPM, Draft Presidential Memorandum
DRV, Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam)

EA, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Department of State
EA/ACA, Office of Asian Communist Affairs, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Department of State

XXVI Abbreviations and Terms

EA/VN, Vietnam Working Group, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Department of State

Exdis, exclusive distribution

Footboy, overall program of clandestine operations against North Vietnam

FRC, Federal Records Center

FULRO, United Front for the Struggle of the Oppressed Race, a movement for Montagnard autonomy

FW, Free World

FWMAF, Free World Military Assistance Forces

FY, fiscal year

FYI, for your information

Govto, series indicators for telegrams from Ambassador at Large W. Averell Harriman

Gp, Group

GRC, Government of the Republic of China

GVN, Government of Vietnam (South Vietnam)

HEW, Department of Health, Education and Welfare

Hickory, joint U.S. Marine Corps-ARVN operations against NVA forces infiltrating through the DMZ in mid-1967

Hop Tac, Government of Vietnam program for pacification of Saigon and surrounding provinces

ICC, International Control Commission

ICEX, Infrastructure Intelligence Coordination and Exploitation

ICRC, International Committee of the Red Cross

IMF, International Monetary Fund

info, information

INR, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State

ISA, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs

JCS, Joint Chiefs of Staff

JCSM, Joint Chiefs of Staff memorandum

JGS, Joint General Staff, Vietnamese Armed Forces

Junction City, military sweep of War Zone C during February through April 1967

JUSPAO, Joint United States Public Affairs Office

KIA, killed in action

Limdis, limited distribution

LOC, line of communication

Louisiana, code name for U.S. effort to secure additional foreign country forces for the Vietnam war

MACV, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam

MAP, Military Assistance Program

Marigold, code name for U.S. peace negotiations through Polish and Italian channels, 1966

McN, Robert McNamara

MFA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MIG, Soviet-built fighter aircraft

NATO, North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NIE, National Intelligence Estimate
NLF, National Liberation Front
NM, nautical miles
Nodis, no distribution
Noform, no foreign distribution
NP, National Police
NPFF, National Police Field Force
NSA, National Security Agency
NSAM, National Security Action Memorandum
NSC, National Security Council
NVA, North Vietnamese Army
NVN, North Vietnam

OAS, Organization of American States
OASD, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense
O/B, order of battle
OCO, Office of Civil Operations
ONE, Office of National Estimates, Central Intelligence Agency
OSD, Office of the Secretary of Defense

PAVN, People's Army of (North) Vietnam
PF, Popular Forces
PFF, Police Field Forces
PFIAB, President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board
P.L., Public Law
PM, Prime Minister
POL, petroleum, oil, lubricants
POLAD, Political Adviser
POW, prisoner of war
Prairie Fire, interdiction operations in Laos
PRC, People's Republic of China
PW, prisoner of war
PX, post exchange

RD, Revolutionary Development
reftel, reference telegram
RF, Regional Forces
RG, Record Group
ROC, Republic of China
ROK, Republic of Korea
Rolling Thunder, code name for program of U.S. air operations in North Vietnam
RP, route packages
RT, Rolling Thunder
RVN, Republic of (South) Vietnam
RVNAF, Republic of (South) Vietnam Armed Forces

S, Secret
SAM, surface to air missiles

XXVIII Abbreviations and Terms

SAVA, Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs, Central Intelligence Agency
SC, Security Council
SDF, Self-Defense Forces
SEA, Southeast Asia
Sea Dragon, naval operations along the North Vietnamese coast up to the 20th parallel
SEATO, Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
SecDef, Secretary of Defense
Secto, series indicator for telegrams from the Secretary of State while away from Washington
septel, separate telegram
SFRC, Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Shining Brass, code name for cross-border operations into Laos and the DMZ
SNIE, Special National Intelligence Estimate
Sitrep, situation report
Southpaw, code name for a plan to conduct raids into Laos by joint U.S. Army-ARVN teams
S/S, Executive Secretariat, Department of State
Steel Tiger, code name for U.S. air strikes against the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos
SVN, South Vietnam
SYG, Secretary-General of the United Nations

TCC, troop contributing countries
Togov, series indicators for telegrams to Ambassador at Large W. Averell Harriman
Tosec, series indicator for telegrams to the Secretary of State while away from Washington
TPP, Thermal Power Plant
TS, Top Secret

U, unclassified
UK, United Kingdom
UN, United Nations
UNGA, United Nations General Assembly
US, United States
USAID, United States Agency for International Development Mission
USG, United States Government
USIA, United States Information Agency
USMACV, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
USOM, United States Operations Mission
USSR, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
USUN, United States Mission to the United Nations

VC, Viet Cong
VN, Vietnam; Vietnam Working Group, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Department of State
VNAF, (South) Vietnamese Air Force
VNCC, Vietnam Coordinating Committee
VNQDD, Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang (Vietnamese Nationalist Party)
VP, Vice President

WH, White House

Z, Zulu (Greenwich Mean Time)

Persons

Akalovsky, Alexander, Political Officer at the Embassy in Moscow September 1965–1968

Alliluyeva, Svetlana, daughter of Josef Stalin

Acheson, Dean, Secretary of State, 1949–1953

Akalovsky, Alexander, First Secretary and Political Officer at the Embassy in the Soviet Union

Albert, Carl, Representative (D-OK), House Majority Leader

Algard, Ole, Norwegian Ambassador to the People's Republic of China

Alsop, Joseph W., journalist, author, and syndicated columnist

Arends, Leslie C., Representative (R-IL), House Minority Whip

Au Truong Thanh, former Vietnamese Economic Minister and Presidential candidate

Aubrac, Raymond, Director of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and an intermediary in Pennsylvania

Baldwin, Hanson W., author and Military Editor for *The New York Times*

Bates, William H., Representative (R-MA), ranking Republican on the House Armed Services Committee

Boggs, Hale, Representative (D-LA)

Bohlen, Charles E., Ambassador to France

Bolton, Frances P., Representative (R-OH), ranking Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee

Bow, Frank T., Representative (R-OH), ranking Republican on the House Appropriations Committee

Bowles, Chester, Ambassador to India

Bradley, General Omar N., USA (ret.), former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Brown, George, British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs

Brown, Harold, Secretary of the Air Force

Bruce, David K. E., Ambassador to the United Kingdom

Bui Diem, Vietnamese Ambassador to the United States

Bundy, McGeorge, President of the Ford Foundation; former Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

Bundy, William P., Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs

Bunker, Ellsworth, Ambassador to Vietnam after April 5, 1967

Byroade, Henry A., Ambassador to Burma

Califano, Joseph A., Jr., Special Assistant to the President

Cao Van Vien, General, ARVN, Chief of the Joint General Staff; also Minister of Defense, January–October 1967

Carver, George, Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs, Central Intelligence Agency

Christian, George, Press Secretary to the President after February 1, 1967

Clifford, Clark M., Chairman, President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board

Colby, William E., Chief, Far East Division, Directorate of Plans, Central Intelligence Agency

Cooper, Chester, Special Assistant to Ambassador at Large W. Averell Harriman

Couve de Murville, Maurice, French Foreign Minister

Dean, Sir Patrick, British Ambassador to the United States

De Gaulle, Charles, President of France

Denney, George C., Jr., Deputy Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State

DePuy, Major General William E., USA, Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities, Joint Chiefs of Staff

Dirksen, Everett McKinley, Senator (R-IL), Senate Majority Leader

Dobrynin, Anatoliy F., Soviet Ambassador to the United States

D'Orlandi, Giovanni, Italian Ambassador to Vietnam

Douglas, Senator Paul H. (D-IL)

Duong Van Minh, former Vietnamese Chief of State

Fanfani, Amintore, Italian Foreign Minister

Ford, Gerald R., Representative (R-MI)

Forsythe, Major General George I., USA, Assistant Deputy to the Commander, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support

Fortas, Abe, Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court

Fowler, Henry H., Secretary of the Treasury

Freeman, Orville H., Secretary of Agriculture

Fulbright, J. William, Senator (D-AR), Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Gandhi, Indira, Indian Prime Minister

Gardner, John W., Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare

Gaud, William S., Administrator of the Agency for International Development

Gavin, Lieutenant General James M., USA (ret.), former Ambassador to France

Ginsburgh, Colonel Robert, USAF, Member of the National Security Council Staff

Goldberg, Arthur J., Representative to the United Nations

Gonard, Samuel, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross

Goodpaster, Lieutenant General Andrew J., USA, Director, Joint Staff

Greene, Fred, Director of the Office of Research and Analysis for East Asia and the Pacific, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State

Greene, General Wallace M., Jr., USMC, Commandant of the Marine Corps

Gromyko, Andrei A., Soviet Foreign Minister

Gronouski, John A., Ambassador to Poland

Habib, Philip C., Minister-Counselor at the Embassy in Vietnam; Deputy Assistant Secretary of East Asian and Pacific Affairs after June 1967

Harkins, General Paul D., USA, former Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, 1962-1964

Harriman, W. Averell, Ambassador at Large

Hart, John L., Chief of the CIA Station in Saigon

Hayden, Carl, Senator (D-AZ), President Pro Tempore and Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee

Helble, John J., Vietnam Working Group, Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, Department of State

Helms, Richard M., Director of Central Intelligence

Hickenlooper, Bourke B., Representative (R-IA)

Hoang Man Tu, National Liberation Front diplomatic representative in Algeria

Hoang Xuan Lam, General, ARVN, Commander of I Corps, Republic of Vietnam

Ho Chi Minh, President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam

Holdridge, John, Deputy Director, Office of Research and Analysis for East Asia and the Pacific, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State

Holt, Harold, Australian Prime Minister until December

Holyoake, Keith, Prime Minister of New Zealand

Hoopes, Townsend W., Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs

Hornig, Donald F., Special Assistant to the President

Hughes, Thomas L., Director, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State
Humphrey, Hubert H., Vice President

Janczewski, Zbigniew, Polish Foreign Ministry official

Javits, Jacob K., Senator (R-NY)

Jenkins, Walter E., Jr., Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy in Poland

Johnson, General Harold K., USA, Chief of Staff, U.S. Army

Johnson, U. Alexis, Ambassador to Japan

Jones, Jim, Assistant to the President

Jorden, William J., Senior Member of the National Security Council Staff

Kaiser, Philip, Deputy Chief of Mission, U.S. Embassy, London

Katzenbach, Nicholas deB., Under Secretary of State

Kennan, George F., author and former Ambassador to the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia

Kennedy, Robert F., Senator (D-NY)

Kissinger, Henry, Professor of Government at Harvard University and Consultant to the Department of State

Kistiakowsky, George B., Professor of Chemistry at Harvard University and Vice President of the National Academy of Sciences

Kohler, Foy D., Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs

Komer, Robert W., President's Special Assistant until May 1967; thereafter Deputy to the Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support, and Special Assistant to the Ambassador to Vietnam with the personal rank of Ambassador

Koren, Henry L. T., Staff Assistant to the Deputy Ambassador to Vietnam

Kosygin, Alexei N., Soviet Premier

Kraft, Joseph, journalist, author, and syndicated columnist

Krulak, Lieutenant General Victor H., USMC, Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific

Kuchel, Thomas H., Senator (R-CA)

Lansdale, Edward G., Special Assistant to the Ambassador to Vietnam

Leonhart, William K., Deputy to Robert W. Komer until May 1967; thereafter Special Assistant to the President

Le Trang, Deputy Chief of Mission, North Vietnamese Embassy in Moscow

Le Van Truong, Vietnamese proponent of Cochinchinese autonomy residing in Europe

Lewandowski, Janusz, Polish Representative to the International Control Commission

Lilienthal, David, Chairman, Development Resources Corporation

Linh Quang Vien, Lieutenant General, ARVN, Minister of National Security; Minister of Interior after November 9, 1967

Lippmann, Walter, author and journalist

Locke, Eugene, Ambassador to Pakistan; Deputy Ambassador to Vietnam after May 1967

Lodge, Henry Cabot, Ambassador to Vietnam until April 1967

Long, Russell B., Senator (D-LA)

Lovett, Robert A., banker and unofficial adviser to the President

Lynd, Staughton, Professor of History at Yale University

Lyng, John, Norwegian Foreign Minister

Lucet, Charles E., French Ambassador to the United States

Mahon, George H., Representative (D-TX), Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee

Mai Thi Vang, wife of Trang Bach Dang released during the Buttercup contacts

Mai Van Bo, Delegate General and Commercial Representative in France of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam

Manac'h, Etienne, Director of Asian Affairs, French Foreign Ministry

- Manatos, Mike, Special Assistant to the President for Congressional Liaison
- Mansfield, Mike, Senator (D-MT), Senate Majority Leader
- Marcos, Ferdinand, President of the Philippines
- Marcovich, Hebert, French professor and intermediary in Pennsylvania
- Marks, Leonard H., Director of the United States Information Agency
- Martin, Graham A., Ambassador to Thailand
- Martin, Paul J., Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs
- McBride, Robert H., Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy in France
- McCarthy, Eugene J., Senator (D-MN)
- McCloy, John J., lawyer and one of the "Wise Men" who served as unofficial advisers to President Johnson
- McConaughy, Walter P., Ambassador to Pakistan until May 17, 1966
- McConnell, General John P., USAF, Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force
- McCormack, John W., Representative (D-MA), Speaker of the House
- McDonald, Admiral David L., USN (ret.), former Chief of Naval Operations
- McGovern, George S., Senator (D-SD)
- McNamara, Robert S., Secretary of Defense
- McNaughton, John T., Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs until July 19
- McPherson, Harry C., Jr., Special Counsel to the President
- Meeker, Leonard C., Legal Adviser to the Department of State
- Michalowski, Jerzy, Director-General, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Miller, Robert H., Director, Vietnam Working Group, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Department of State
- Molotov, Vyacheslav M., former Soviet Foreign Minister, 1946-1949
- Momyer, General William H., USAF, Commander, U.S. 7th Air Force in South Vietnam.
- Moorer, Admiral Thomas H., USN, Chief of Naval Operations
- Morgan, Thomas E., Representative (D-PA), Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee
- Morse, Wayne, Senator (D-OR)
- Moyers, Bill D., former Press Secretary to the President
- Mundt, Karl E., Senator (R-SD)
-
- Ngo Minh Loan, North Vietnamese Ambassador to the People's Republic of China
- Nguyen Bao Tri, Vietnamese Minister of Revolutionary Development after November 9, 1967
- Nguyen Cao Ky, Air Vice Marshal, VNAF, Vietnamese Prime Minister and Chairman, National Executive Committee until October 31, 1967; thereafter Vice President
- Nguyen Chi Thanh, General, PAVN, Head of the Central Office for South Vietnam until July
- Nguyen Duc Thang, General, ARVN, Vietnamese Minister of Rural Revolutionary Development through October; thereafter Commanding General of IV CTZ.
- Nguyen Duy Trinh, North Vietnamese Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister
- Nguyen Huu An, Permanent Secretary of the Vietnamese Red Cross
- Nguyen Huu Co, Vietnamese Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister until January
- Nguyen Huu Hanh, Vietnamese Minister of Economy and Finance and Governor, National Bank of Vietnam
- Nguyen Huu Tho, Chairman of the Central Committee of the National Liberation Front until March
- Nguyen Khanh, former Vietnamese Premier
- Nguyen Luu Vien, Vietnamese Deputy Premier and Minister for Cultural and Social Affairs
- Nguyen Ngoc Loan, Director General of the Vietnamese National Police and Chief of the Military Security Service

- Nguyen Tho Chan, North Vietnamese Ambassador to the Soviet Union
- Nguyen Van Loc, President, Army People's Council and Prime Minister after October 31, 1967
- Nguyen Van Thieu, Lieutenant General, ARVN, Vietnamese Chief of State and Chairman, National Leadership Committee until October 31; thereafter President
- Nguyen Van Vy, General, ARVN, Chief of Staff, ARVN; Minister of National Defense after November 9, 1967
- Nilsson, Torsten, Swedish Foreign Minister
- Nitze, Paul, Secretary of the Navy through June 1967; thereafter Deputy Secretary of Defense
- Nixon, Richard, former Vice President
- O'Brien, Lawrence, Postmaster General
- Owen, Henry D., Chairman of the Policy Planning Council, Department of State
- Park, Chung Hee, President of Korea
- Pearson, Lester, Canadian Prime Minister
- Pell, Claiborne, Senator (D-RI)
- Pham Thi Yen, wife of Tan Buu Kiem
- Pham Van Dong, Premier of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam
- Phan Khac Suu, chairman of the Vietnamese Constituent Assembly and presidential candidate
- Phan Huy Quat, former Vietnamese Premier and Presidential candidate
- Poats, Rutherford, Assistant Administrator, Bureau for the Far East, Agency for International Development; Deputy Administrator, Agency for International Development after May 1967
- Pompidou, Georges, French Premier
- Porter, William J., Deputy Ambassador to Vietnam; after May 1967 Ambassador to Korea
- Rapacki, Adam, Polish Foreign Minister
- Read, Benjamin H., Special Assistant to the Secretary of State and Executive Secretary of the Department
- Reston, James B., journalist and Associate Editor, *The New York Times*
- Rice, Edward, Consul General in Hong Kong
- Ridgway, General Matthew B., USA (ret.), U.S. Army Chief of Staff, 1953–1955
- Rivers, L. Mendel, Representative (D-SC), Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee
- Roche, John P., Special Consultant to the President
- Ropa, Donald W., Member of the National Security Council Staff
- Rostow, Eugene V., Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
- Rostow, Walt W., Special Assistant to the President
- Rusk, Dean, Secretary of State
- Russell, Richard B., Senator (D-GA), Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee
- Sainteny, Jean, former French colonial official in Indochina and adviser to President Charles de Gaulle
- Sato, Eisaku, Japanese Prime Minister
- Sau Ha, Viet Cong courier whose arrest initiated the Buttercup contacts
- Sharp, Admiral Ulysses S. Grant, USN, Commander in Chief, Pacific
- Shelepin, Alexandr N., Secretary of the Central Committee, Soviet Communist Party
- Sieverts, Frank, Special Assistant to Ambassador at Large W. Averell Harriman
- Smathers, George A., Senator (D-FL)
- Smith, Bromley K., Executive Secretary of the National Security Council
- Sorensen, Theodore, Adviser to Senator Robert Kennedy

Souvanna Phouma, Prince, Laotian Prime Minister

Starbird, Lieutenant General Alfred D., USA, Director, Defense Communications Agency

Steadman, John M., Special Assistant to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense

Stearns, Monteagle, Special Assistant to Ambassador at Large W. Averell Harriman

Stennis, John C., Senator (D-MS)

Stewart, Michael N.F., British Ambassador to the United States

Sullivan, William H., Ambassador to Laos

Symington, Stuart, Senator (D-MO)

Tan Buu Kiem, Chief, Foreign Affairs Committee, National Liberation Front

Taylor, General Maxwell D., USA (ret.), Special Consultant to the President

Thanat Khoman, Thai Foreign Minister

Thanom Kittikachorn, Thai Prime Minister and Defense Minister

Thant, U, Secretary-General of the United Nations

Thompson, Llewellyn E., Jr., Ambassador to the Soviet Union

Tibbets, Margaret Joy, Ambassador to Norway

Tran Bach Dang, Presidium Member, National Liberation Front Central Committee

Tran Quoc Buu, Vietnamese labor leader

Tran Van Do, Vietnamese Foreign Minister

Tri Quang, leader of the Buddhist Struggle Movement

Trueheart, William C., Deputy Director for Coordination, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State

Truong Dinh Dzu, South Vietnamese presidential candidate

Truong Binh Tong, imprisoned National Liberation Front official who was released to act as intermediary in the Buttercup episode

Unger, Leonard S., Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs until August 11, 1967; thereafter Ambassador to Thailand

Vance, Cyrus R., Deputy Secretary of Defense until June

Vinh Loc, General, ARVN, Commander of II Corps

Vo Nguyen Giap, General, PAVN, Minister of National Defense, Democratic Republic of Vietnam

Vu Van Thai, former Vietnamese Ambassador to the United States

Walt, Lieutenant General Lewis W., USMC, Commander of the U.S. III Marine Amphibious Force and I Corps Senior Adviser

Wehrle, Leroy S., Associate Director and Economic Counselor in Vietnam, Agency for International Development

Westmoreland, General William C., USA, Commander, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam

Wheeler, General Earle G., USA, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Wilson, Harold, British Prime Minister

Wilson, Samuel V., Saigon Mission Coordinator

Y Bham Enuol, Chairman, United Front for the Struggle of the Oppressed Race (FULRO)

Zorthian, Barry, Minister-Counselor for Information at the Embassy in Vietnam and Director, U.S. Joint Public Affairs Office.

Note on U.S. Covert Actions

In compliance with the *Foreign Relations of the United States* statute to include in the *Foreign Relations* series comprehensive documentation on major foreign policy decisions and actions, the editors have sought to present essential documents regarding major covert actions and intelligence activities. The following note will provide readers with some organizational context on how covert actions and special intelligence operations in support of U.S. foreign policy were planned and approved within the U.S. Government. It describes, on the basis of declassified documents, the changing and developing procedures during the Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson Presidencies.

Management of Covert Actions in the Truman Presidency

The Truman administration's concern over Soviet "psychological warfare" prompted the new National Security Council to authorize, in NSC 4-A of December 1947, the launching of peacetime covert action operations. NSC 4-A made the Director of Central Intelligence responsible for psychological warfare, establishing at the same time the principle that covert action was an exclusively Executive Branch function. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) certainly was a natural choice but it was assigned this function at least in part because the Agency controlled unvouchered funds, by which operations could be funded with minimal risk of exposure in Washington.¹

CIA's early use of its new covert action mandate dissatisfied officials at the Departments of State and Defense. The Department of State, believing this role too important to be left to the CIA alone and concerned that the military might create a new rival covert action office in the Pentagon, pressed to reopen the issue of where responsibility for covert action activities should reside. Consequently, on June 18, 1948, a new NSC directive, NSC 10/2, superseded NSC 4-A.

NSC 10/2 directed CIA to conduct "covert" rather than merely "psychological" operations, defining them as all activities "which are conducted or sponsored by this Government against hostile foreign states or groups or in support of friendly foreign states or groups but which are so planned and executed that any US Government responsibility for them is not evident to unauthorized persons and that if uncovered the US Government can plausibly disclaim any responsibility for them."

The type of clandestine activities enumerated under the new directive included: "propaganda; economic warfare; preventive direct action, including sabotage, demolition and evacuation measures;

¹ NSC 4-A, December 17, 1947, is printed in *Foreign Relations, 1945-1950, Emergence of the Intelligence Establishment*, Document 257.

subversion against hostile states, including assistance to underground resistance movements, guerrillas and refugee liberations [*sic*] groups, and support of indigenous anti-Communist elements in threatened countries of the free world. Such operations should not include armed conflict by recognized military forces, espionage, counter-espionage, and cover and deception for military operations."²

The Office of Policy Coordination (OPC), newly established in the CIA on September 1, 1948, in accordance with NSC 10/2, assumed responsibility for organizing and managing covert actions. OPC, which was to take its guidance from the Department of State in peacetime and from the military in wartime, initially had direct access to the State Department and to the military without having to proceed through CIA's administrative hierarchy, provided the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) was informed of all important projects and decisions.³ In 1950 this arrangement was modified to ensure that policy guidance came to OPC through the DCI.

During the Korean conflict the OPC grew quickly. Wartime commitments and other missions soon made covert action the most expensive and bureaucratically prominent of CIA's activities. Concerned about this situation, DCI Walter Bedell Smith in early 1951 asked the NSC for enhanced policy guidance and a ruling on the proper "scope and magnitude" of CIA operations. The White House responded with two initiatives. In April 1951 President Truman created the Psychological Strategy Board (PSB) under the NSC to coordinate government-wide psychological warfare strategy. NSC 10/5, issued in October 1951, reaffirmed the covert action mandate given in NSC 10/2 and expanded CIA's authority over guerrilla warfare.⁴ The PSB was soon abolished by the incoming Eisenhower administration, but the expansion of CIA's covert action writ in NSC 10/5 helped ensure that covert action would remain a major function of the Agency.

As the Truman administration ended, CIA was near the peak of its independence and authority in the field of covert action. Although CIA continued to seek and receive advice on specific projects from the NSC, the PSB, and the departmental representatives originally delegated to advise OPC, no group or officer outside of the DCI and the

² NSC 10/2, June 18, 1948, printed *ibid.*, Document 292.

³ Memorandum of conversation by Frank G. Wisner, "Implementation of NSC-10/2," August 12, 1948, printed *ibid.*, Document 298.

⁴ NSC 10/5, "Scope and Pace of Covert Operations," October 23, 1951, in Michael Warner, editor, *The CIA Under Harry Truman* (Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, 1994), pp. 437-439.

President himself had authority to order, approve, manage, or curtail operations.

NSC 5412 Special Group; 5412/2 Special Group; 303 Committee

The Eisenhower administration began narrowing CIA's latitude in 1954. In accordance with a series of National Security Council directives, the responsibility of the Director of Central Intelligence for the conduct of covert operations was further clarified. President Eisenhower approved NSC 5412 on March 15, 1954, reaffirming the Central Intelligence Agency's responsibility for conducting covert actions abroad. A definition of covert actions was set forth; the DCI was made responsible for coordinating with designated representatives of the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense to ensure that covert operations were planned and conducted in a manner consistent with U.S. foreign and military policies; and the Operations Coordinating Board was designated the normal channel for coordinating support for covert operations among State, Defense, and CIA. Representatives of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the President were to be advised in advance of major covert action programs initiated by the CIA under this policy and were to give policy approval for such programs and secure coordination of support among the Departments of State and Defense and the CIA.⁵

A year later, on March 12, 1955, NSC 5412/1 was issued, identical to NSC 5412 except for designating the Planning Coordination Group as the body responsible for coordinating covert operations. NSC 5412/2 of December 28, 1955, assigned to representatives (of the rank of assistant secretary) of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the President responsibility for coordinating covert actions. By the end of the Eisenhower administration, this group, which became known as the "NSC 5412/2 Special Group" or simply "Special Group," emerged as the executive body to review and approve covert action programs initiated by the CIA.⁶ The membership of the Special Group varied depending upon the situation faced. Meetings were infrequent until 1959 when weekly meetings began to be held. Neither the CIA nor the Special Group adopted fixed criteria for bringing projects before the

⁵ William M. Leary, editor, *The Central Intelligence Agency: History and Documents* (The University of Alabama Press, 1984), p. 63; the text of NSC 5412 is scheduled for publication in *Foreign Relations, 1950–1955, Development of the Intelligence Community*.

⁶ Leary, *The Central Intelligence Agency: History and Documents*, pp. 63, 147–148; *Final Report of the Select Committee To Study Governmental Operations With Respect to Intelligence Activities, United States Senate, Book I, Foreign and Military Intelligence* (1976), pp. 50–51. The texts of NSC 5412/1 and NSC 5412/2 are scheduled for publication in *Foreign Relations, 1950–1955, Development of the Intelligence Community*.

group; initiative remained with the CIA, as members representing other agencies frequently were unable to judge the feasibility of particular projects.⁷

After the Bay of Pigs failure in April 1961, General Maxwell Taylor reviewed U.S. paramilitary capabilities at President Kennedy's request and submitted a report in June which recommended strengthening high-level direction of covert operations. As a result of the Taylor Report, the Special Group, chaired by the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs McGeorge Bundy, and including Deputy Under Secretary of State U. Alexis Johnson, Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric, Director of Central Intelligence Allen Dulles, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Lyman Lemnitzer, assumed greater responsibility for planning and reviewing covert operations. Until 1963 the DCI determined whether a CIA-originated project was submitted to the Special Group. In 1963 the Special Group developed general but informal criteria, including risk, possibility of success, potential for exposure, political sensitivity, and cost (a threshold of \$25,000 was adopted by the CIA), for determining whether covert action projects were submitted to the Special Group.⁸

From November 1961 to October 1962 a Special Group (Augmented), whose membership was the same as the Special Group plus Attorney General Robert Kennedy and General Taylor (as Chairman), exercised responsibility for Operation Mongoose, a major covert action program aimed at overthrowing the Castro regime in Cuba. When President Kennedy authorized the program in November, he designated Brigadier General Edward G. Lansdale, Assistant for Special Operations to the Secretary of Defense, to act as chief of operations, and Lansdale coordinated the Mongoose activities among the CIA and the Departments of State and Defense. CIA units in Washington and Miami had primary responsibility for implementing Mongoose operations, which included military, sabotage, and political propaganda programs.⁹

President Kennedy also established a Special Group (Counter-Insurgency) on January 18, 1962, when he signed NSAM No. 124. The Special Group (CI), set up to coordinate counter-insurgency activities separate from the mechanism for implementing NSC 5412/2, was to confine itself to establishing broad policies aimed at preventing and resisting subversive insurgency and other forms of indirect aggression in friendly countries. In early 1966, in NSAM No. 341, President Johnson assigned responsibility for the direction and coordination of

⁷ Leary, *The Central Intelligence Agency: History and Documents*, p. 63.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁹ See *Foreign Relations, 1961-1963*, vol. X, Documents 270 and 278.

counter-insurgency activities overseas to the Secretary of State, who established a Senior Interdepartmental Group to assist in discharging these responsibilities.¹⁰

NSAM No. 303, June 2, 1964, from Bundy to the Secretaries of State and Defense and the DCI, changed the name of "Special Group 5412" to "303 Committee" but did not alter its composition, functions, or responsibility. Bundy was the chairman of the 303 Committee.¹¹

The Special Group and the 303 Committee approved 163 covert actions during the Kennedy administration and 142 during the Johnson administration through February 1967. The 1976 Final Report of the Church Committee, however, estimated that of the several thousand projects undertaken by the CIA since 1961, only 14 percent were considered on a case-by-case basis by the 303 Committee and its predecessors (and successors). Those not reviewed by the 303 Committee were low-risk and low-cost operations. The Final Report also cited a February 1967 CIA memorandum that included a description of the mode of policy arbitration of decisions on covert actions within the 303 Committee system. CIA presentations were questioned, amended, and even on occasion denied, despite protests from the DCI. Department of State objections modified or nullified proposed operations, and the 303 Committee sometimes decided that some agency other than CIA should undertake an operation or that CIA actions requested by Ambassadors on the scene should be rejected.¹²

¹⁰ For text of NSAM No. 124, see *ibid.*, vol. VIII, Document 68. NSAM No. 341, March 2, 1966, is printed *ibid.*, 1964–1968, vol. XXXIII, Document 56.

¹¹ For text of NSAM No. 303, see *ibid.*, Document 204.

¹² *Final Report of the Select Committee To Study Governmental Operations With Respect to Intelligence Activities, United States Senate, Book I, Foreign and Military Intelligence*, pp. 56–57.

Vietnam, 1967

Marigold, Sunflower, and the Continuing Search for Peace, January–February

1. Paper Prepared by the President's Special Consultant (Taylor)¹

Washington, January 1, 1967.

COMMENTS ON VIET-NAM

As we enter the New Year, there are many aspects of the situation in Viet-Nam which deserve review but I have singled out only two for comment in this paper because of their prime importance.

a. Role of United States Ground Forces

There is a clear trend toward an expanded role for United States Ground Forces during the coming year, a trend which results from the success of our offensive search-and-destroy operations and the sluggishness of the pacification program. (For convenience, I continue to use that inadequate word "pacification" to refer to all those military and civil activities involved in clearing, holding, securing and rebuilding rural South Viet-Nam.) It will be further accentuated if the Viet Cong adopt or attempt to adopt a policy of reversion to small guerilla-type operations and of avoidance of large unit clashes with our forces. If this kind is not checked, it can result in the deep involvement of our forces in clear-and-hold operations, static security missions, and local civil administration.

It is impossible to argue against the importance, indeed the indispensability of these activities but I have real concern over assuming them as primary tasks for United States ground forces. In the first place, they are inconsistent with the distinguishing attributes of our troops—mobility, fire-power and aptitude for the offensive. By their nature, they would impose relatively static, defensive dispositions on our units with responsibilities for terrain, population and local administration

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Taylor Report on Overseas Operations and Misc. Memos. Secret. A marginal note indicates that Taylor sent this paper to President Johnson. In a January 3 memorandum to the President, Taylor requested that his role as special consultant be terminated. (Ibid., Gen. Taylor (2 of 2)) Rostow forwarded both memoranda to the President on January 4. The next day, Rostow called Taylor and told him that the President wished him to "stay on." (Rostow note on memorandum from Rostow to the President, January 4; *ibid.*) At the direction of the President, Rostow sent copies of Taylor's memoranda to Secretaries McNamara and Rusk. (Memorandum from Rostow to Rusk and McNamara, January 5; *ibid.*)

which raise a host of questions. How well would our troops deal with the problems arising from a close intermingling with the civilian population? If successful in their community relations, will it be at the expense of the relationship of the GVN with their own citizens? What about the growing “colonialist” image of the white man? Where do we get the non-military skills to deal with the local, civil problems?

I suspect that our troops would perform quite well in this new environment and that we would thus resolve a lot of the short-term problems which are delaying progress in pacification. I am not at all sure, however, that we would not thereby create long-term problems resulting from substituting American initiative and leadership in areas where the Vietnamese must eventually assume responsibility. Most of all, I am concerned by the implications of added troop requirements if this trend to expanded missions goes unchecked.

At the time of the submission of General Westmoreland’s “Concept of Military Operations in South Viet-Nam” last August,² I suggested that a searching analysis of the implicit troop requirements be made at that time. Now I again suggest the need for looking this issue clearly in the eye and deciding what roles our ground forces should undertake in the pacification field. If no limit is set in principle, Washington will continue to receive from Westmoreland repeated requests for troops which it may be hard to decline. If he is not given policy guidance, Westmoreland will be justified in assuming that his concepts for the employment of our troops are consistent with Washington policy. But is it? We need to be sure of the answer.

I would think that, before accepting the inevitability of this expanded role for United States troops, we would leave no stone unturned to assure the Armed Forces of Viet-Nam have made a maximum contribution to pacification under the terms of their new assignment.

b. Preparations for a Viet-Nam Settlement

Although I am not privy to current actions in the government to prepare for a settlement of the Viet-Nam situation, I am struck by the lack of public discussion of the very real problems involved in a settlement and hence the lack of preparation of public opinion for their appearance and for the conduct of our government in coping with them.

The problems I have in mind are those related to such things as getting talks started under conditions favorable to a definitive settlement, keeping discussions going without bogging down in a Panmunjom kind of stalemate and, throughout, playing our “blue chips”

² *Foreign Relations, 1964–1968*, vol. IV, Document 220.

wisely and effectively so that we come away from the conference table with our basic objective of an independent South Viet-Nam, free from the danger of external aggression.

Such problems relate to a formal negotiation; a tacit settlement in which violence merely subsides and eventually goes away would avoid many of these but would have others of its own. How to verify and measure subsidence? How to determine when our objective has been attained and when it is safe to go home? While fewer in number than for the negotiated settlement, these questions might prove more time-consuming than the requirements of a full-dress conference.

In either case, if we are not to sacrifice our basic objective, our government is going to have to take and maintain some very tough and unpopular positions before domestic and international opinion. We will have to justify the rejection of peace feelers which clearly have no motivation beyond a desire for propaganda advantage. We must avoid the pitfalls of accepting a cease-fire, almost certain to work to our disadvantage, and seek instead to negotiate a complete package which will include a cessation of both military and terrorist actions. To avoid foot-dragging at a conference, we will be obliged to continue to keep military pressure on the enemy—on this point, we need to reread Admiral Joy's record of the stalemate at Panmunjom.³

In justification of the play of our "blue chips", we need to identify them openly and give some indication of our estimate of their worth—particularly of the chip representing our bombing of the North. It is perfectly apparent that the Communist World has mounted a world-wide campaign (assisted by certain of our fellow citizens on the home front) to force us to play this chip in advance for the privilege of negotiating. But I do not believe that the significance of this campaign is generally clear to the public nor is the reason why it would be fatal to the attainment of our basic objective to surrender this chip to the Communist-inspired clamor.

In a settlement based on the subsidence of violence, we will have the task of insisting on a graduated de-escalation in phase with verified performance by the other side—a verification difficult and slow to obtain. We will need patience and determination to see this process through, resisting throughout any emotional impulse to "bring the boys home" as occurred at the end of World War II.

My conclusion is that we need to be sure of our own government position on these and similar points and prepare our people in advance for the courses of action which we are likely to take—courses which

³ Reference is to Admiral C. Turner Joy, *How the Communists Negotiate* (New York: Macmillan, 1955).

many of our people will find unreasonably harsh. To get their support, we need to restate over and over the importance of our basic objective and the need to clinch it at the conference table.. Otherwise we will lose the sacrifices which we and our allies have made and the gains achieved in other fields in over a decade of conflict.

MDT⁴

⁴ Printed from a copy that bears these typed initials.

2.. Telegram From the Commander, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (Westmoreland) to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Wheeler) and the Commander in Chief, Pacific Forces (Sharp)¹

Saigon, January 2, 1967, 1238Z.

MACJ00 00160. Personal for Admiral Sharp and General Wheeler from General Westmoreland. Subject: Year-end assessment of enemy situation and enemy strategy (U).

1. (U) As the year ends, it occurs to me that you may find useful a current summary of the enemy's situation; his objectives, tactics and strategy; and my evaluation thereof.

2. (S) Summary of the enemy situation: Forces currently available to the enemy in SVN as identified in MACV order of Battle are nine division headquarters, 34 regimental headquarters, 152 combat battalions, 34 combat support battalions, 196 separate companies, and 70 separate platoons totaling some 128,600, plus at least 112,800 militia and at least 39,175 political cadre. The principal threats posed are in the DMZ area, the Chu-Pong region, and the Tay-Ning/Phuoc Long area of Northern III CTZ. Although enemy forces in these areas have been punished in operations during 1966, they have not been destroyed and are continuing efforts to reinforce, resupply, and plan for resumption of operations in a winter-spring campaign. Enemy capabilities throughout SVN are summarized in the following paragraphs:

A. Attack. The enemy can attack at any time selected targets in I, II, and III CTZ in up to division strength and in IV CTZ in up to reg-

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXIII, Cables. Secret; Immediate; Exclusive.

imental strength, supported by local force and guerrillas. Simultaneously, he can continue harassing attacks throughout SVN.

(1) In I CTZ, he can attack objectives in the DMZ area (Quang Tri Province) with elements of the 324B and 341st NVA Divisions supported by one separate regiment. Additionally, he can attack objectives in Quang Tin or Quang Ngai Provinces with the 2d NVA Division and two regiments of the 3d NVA Division. In Thua Tien and Quang Nam Provinces he can attack in up to regimental strength.

(2) In II CTZ, he has the capability to attack in Western Pleiku, Southern Kontum, or Northern Darlac Provinces with elements of the 1st and 10th NVA Divisions, in Northern Binh Dinh Province with one regiment of the 3d NVA Division, and in Pho Yen and Northern Khanh Hoa Provinces with elements of the two regiments of the 5th NVA division.

(3) In III CTZ, he can attack with the 9th VC and possibly the 7th NVA Divisions in Tay Ninh, Binh Long, Binh Duong, or Phuoc Long Provinces, and in Phuoc Tuy and Southern Long Khanh Provinces with elements of the two regiments of the 5th VC Division. He also can sabotage GVN and FW shipping transiting the Rung Sat special zone with a sapper battalion; harass installations and LOC's in Gia Ding Province with elements of the 165A VC Regiment. He has the capability of continuing his terror campaign in Saigon/Cholon.

(4) In IV CTZ, he can attack in up to regimental strength in Chuong Thien and Dinh Tuong Provinces, and in up to reinforced battalion strength throughout the rest of the CTZ. Militia and guerrilla forces predominate, and emphasis is on harassing attacks and local action to consolidate and extend his control.

B. Political attack. The enemy is expected to continue efforts to: destroy the effectiveness of hamlet, village, district, provincial, and national governments by elimination, intimidation, and subversion of GVN officials; discredit and erode GVN political authority at all levels by conducting propaganda attacks against elected and appointed GVN officials and against GVN programs.²

C. Economic attack. We expect the enemy to intensify efforts to impose an economic blockade against the GVN by denying the latter access to its own resources; conduct overt and covert operations throughout SVN against targets of vital economic significance to the maintenance and growth of the GVN economy; stimulate inflation by diverting commodities destined for SVN markets and by denying com-

² The enemy also scored propaganda points by declaring on January 1 a Tet cease-fire for the period February 8–15. See *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1967*, p. 818.

modities from markets through interdiction and harassment of LOC's; and undermine the people's confidence in SVN currency by propaganda and possible counterfeiting.

D. Reinforce. The enemy has the demonstrated capability to reinforce in SVN by infiltrating personnel and units from NVN at a rate of about 8,400 men per month and by in-country recruitment of about 3,500 per month in VC main and local forces. In the tactical sense, his dependence on foot movement normally precludes major reinforcement on the battlefield beyond attack forces initially committed. Defensively, he normally conducts holding actions to enable extrication of the main body rather than reinforcing.

(1) In I CTZ, he can reinforce his attack or defense through the DMZ and from Laos within three to ten days after commencing movement with three divisions, three infantry regiments, and eight infantry battalions. He can reinforce his attack or defense with one infantry division from Binh Dinh Province in II CTZ and one infantry regiment from Kontum Province in II CTZ in twelve days after commencing movement. Many of these units are presently understrength.

(2) In II CTZ, he can reinforce his attack or defense in northern II CTZ within ten days by elements of one infantry division from southern I CTZ and in southern II CTZ within five to ten days after commencing movement by up to two regiments from III CTZ.

(3) In III CTZ, he can reinforce his attack or defense in the northern portion with three separate battalions from II CTZ and with one regiment from IV CTZ within three to ten days after commencing movement.

(4) Preponderance of militia and local forces in IV Corps and the reliance upon encroachment through local and harassing action makes large unit reinforcement unlikely in IV CTZ.

(5) Politically and economically, the enemy will seek to reinforce his effort by increased assistance from other Communist countries, principally Communist China and the USSR, and there is no indication that current levels of aid will decrease. In SVN, he will reinforce by infiltrating additional political and economic cadre from NVN, and by training additional cadre in country.

E. Withdraw. He has the capability to withdraw or break down his main force units and attempt to achieve his objectives by guerrilla and small unit operations. Furthermore, he can stop his political warfare and withdraw elements of the infrastructure from disputed and/or GVN controlled areas. While he has these capabilities, there is no evidence that he is fragmenting his forces, reverting to exclusively guerrilla type operations, or downgrading his political and economic effort.

3. (S) Enemy strategy: The conclusion to be drawn from the enemy's strength increase of some 42,000 during 1966 is that despite

known losses, he has been able to maintain a proportional counter-buildup to the growth of US/FWMA forces. Sources of this increase are in-country conscription and foot infiltration down the trails from NVN through the DMZ, but principally through Laos and the Cambodian extension. To understand what the enemy is doing and is likely to do in the coming year, it is essential to understand his objectives, strategy, and major tactics, all of which derive from the principles of insurgency warfare (or "wars of national liberation") which essentially are political in nature and which have been described by Mao Tse Tung, Vo Nguyen Giap, and others such as Che Guevara with clarity and conviction. To aid in conveying this picture I have summarized in the succeeding sub paragraphs my estimate of his overall strategy and its probable continued application.

A. Objectives: The enemy's objectives in SVN may be expressed under two dual headings: to extend his control over the population of SVN and to prevent the GVN from controlling that population; to reduce the will to resist of the US/FWMAE and their governments and correspondingly to strengthen his own posture and will.

B. Strategy: The enemy's favored doctrine of "strategic mobility" has been the subject of debate in NVN. Politburo member Nguyen Chi Thanh has held that the proper application is to initiate mobile warfare with simultaneous attacks throughout SVN. Defense Minister Vo Nguyen Giap, whose view has prevailed as seen by our experience, favors a "defensive/offensive" version of strategic mobility consisting of these factors:

(1) Developing strong, multi-division forces in dispersed regions accessible to supplies and security.

(2) enticing US/FWMA forces into prepared positions where dug-in Communist forces may inflict heavy casualties upon them.

(3) Conducting concurrent, intensified guerrilla and harassment pressure country-wide to tie down our forces, destroy small units, attack morale, and extend his control.

4. (S) Evaluation:

A. Present enemy dispositions, logistics, and level of combat indicate a continued adherence to the doctrine of strategic mobility implemented by Giap's "defensive/offensive" major tactics. Our intelligence does not indicate a change in enemy strategy, tactics, or weapons now or in the coming year, although this possibility remains under continuous scrutiny. Specifically, we have no evidence of an intent to fragment his main forces and revert exclusively to guerrilla-type operations.

B. The enemy was hurt during 1966 in many areas, and his principal concentrations near sanctuaries at the DMZ, in the Chu Pong region, and in the Tay Ninh/Binh Long areas, have been contained by our preemptive operations as a result of which he has suffered heavy losses. He is avoiding major contact by fighting defensively when

forced to do so, and attempting to rebuild and reinforce for winter-spring campaign operations. It would be premature to assume that an apparent decrease in activity in December just prior to holiday stand-downs is indicative of a change in trend. Further, it would be erroneous to conclude that VC main force and NVA formations are no longer dangerous, that their unit integrity has been destroyed, or that their logistical capability has fallen below that needed to sustain his war of conquest by attrition.

C. On level of battalion [garble—combat?] the enemy has maintained throughout 1966 is about 1 day in 30. This level is consistent with his strategy of conserving his forces while attriting US/FWMA forces, and is within his capability to support logistically. If forced to a higher level such as 1 day in 15, he will encounter difficulty.

D. It is probable that the enemy during the coming year will attempt to infiltrate men and supplies into SVN by sea, through Laos and Cambodia, and across the DMZ to: counter-balance the US/FWMAF build-up; maintain a credible threat posture; attrit friendly forces and determination by inflicting casualties and prolonging the conflict; maintain and promote expansion of the insurgency base (infra-structure and militia); and continue his protracted war to control the people of SVN.³

³ In a memorandum requested by Secretary of Defense McNamara, the CIA also concluded that “the present force level can be sustained if Hanoi chooses.” (Memorandum from Kent to Helms, January 9; Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXIII, Cables)

3. Editorial Note

Harrison Salisbury, a senior reporter for *The New York Times*, visited Hanoi December 23, 1966–January 7, 1967. As a result of his trip, he wrote nearly two dozen articles for the newspaper alleging that U.S. aerial bombardment had caused extensive damage to civilians and non-military targets. See *Foreign Relations, 1964–1968*, volume IV, Document 352. Although Salisbury’s critique concerned the administration, U.S. officials did little to dispute the dispatches publicly. However, in private some argued that Salisbury’s reports “contain exaggerations and that where they were not clearly based on Salisbury’s own observations, they appear to lean heavily on North Vietnamese propaganda.” (Telegram 111162 to Saigon, December 31, 1966; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1964–66, POL 27 VIET S)

Salisbury's most important contact in Hanoi was on January 2 with Democratic Republic of Vietnam Premier Pham Van Dong. During this long discussion, Dong insisted that the National Liberation Front's official terms for ending the war, known as the Four Points, were not "preconditions" for settlement talks, but rather a simple framework for any eventual settlement. Salisbury later wrote that Dong had implied that if Washington made the first move by unconditionally ending the bombing of the North, "we would know what to do," a statement that Salisbury believed was a rejection of overt reciprocity but not of secret, direct discussions. (Harrison Salisbury, *Behind the Lines—Hanoi*, New York: Harper & Row, 1967, pages 192–205)

The First Secretary of the French Embassy in Washington Roger Duzer informed Richard Smyser of the Vietnam Working Group that Hungarian officials told the French that Hanoi no longer insisted upon U.S. acceptance of the Four Points in advance of negotiations and observed that Mai Van Bo had recently remarked that Hanoi would "examine and study" possible negotiations if bombing ceased permanently and unconditionally. Duzer thought this was a "new position." (Memorandum of conversation, January 5, 5:30 p.m.; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, EA/VN Files: Lot 75 D 167, TS-POLMIL-DRV/PRG-Negotiations and Settlement, 1965–67) The Four Points included an end to U.S. involvement and warfare in Vietnam, the implementation of the military provisions of the 1954 Geneva Accords, a political settlement "in accordance with the programme of the South Vietnam National Liberation Front," and the peaceful reunification of Vietnam without foreign interference. For text of the Four Points, see *Foreign Relations*, 1964–1968, volume II, Document 245.

On January 13 in Washington, Salisbury met with Secretary of State Rusk and Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs William P. Bundy to brief them on his visit to North Vietnam, and especially Dong's statement on the relation between the Four Points and a bombing cessation. Salisbury argued that the Prime Minister's remarks (which Hanoi did not want to be made public) represented a moderation in North Vietnam's negotiating stance. He presented the notes of his meeting, which differed in significant ways from the final version edited by North Vietnamese officials. Most important was the exclusion of Dong's statement that if the United States "stops doing harm to the North we know what we should do," a remark that was deleted by the DRV censors. Salisbury maintained that this act indicated that it was a statement meant to remain confidential and thus was of great importance. In addition, Salisbury drew the conclusion that Dong, although remaining elusive on reciprocal restraints, did not reject the convening of private talks with U.S. officials. The "atmospherics" of his visit demonstrated in his mind that Hanoi was prepared for "secret explorations." Memorandum of conversation, January 13; Na-

tional Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1964–69, POL 27–14 VIET S) Another debriefing of Salisbury conducted by Department of Defense officials was summarized in a January 20 memorandum from the Director of the Office of Research and Analysis for East Asia and the Pacific of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Frederick Greene, to Bundy. (Ibid., EA Files: Lot 74 D 246, Miscellaneous–Salisbury)

4. Memorandum From Secretary of State Rusk to President Johnson¹

Washington, January 3, 1967.

SUBJECT

Necessary Actions in Connection with the Marigold Project

1. As you know, Rapacki on December 29 told Gronouski that Hanoi was definitely not prepared for direct talks, despite our undertaking to suspend bombing within ten miles of the center of Hanoi for an indefinite period. Rapacki claimed that Hanoi believed that our bombing, particularly of December 13–14, showed clearly that we were not in good faith in seeking talks. Rapacki thinks the possibility of getting conversations started through the Poles is now dead.²

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1964–67, POL 27–14 VIET/MARIGOLD. Top Secret; Marigold. The date is handwritten on the memorandum and a note indicates that Rusk saw it. The memorandum was used at a luncheon meeting that day with the President, Rostow, and McNamara which lasted from 1:35 to 4 p.m. (Johnson Library, President's Daily Diary) A substantive record of the meeting has not been found. On December 15, 1966, Paul Martin, Canadian Foreign Minister, suggested using the offices of the International Control and Supervisory Commission to bring about the opening of peace talks. As an initial step, he proposed a meeting of the ICC representative nations (Canada, Poland, and India) to begin the process of mediating the conflict without the venue of a formal conference (which the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was reluctant to enter into at this point). (Telegram 105378, December 19, and telegram 105380, December 19, both to Ottawa; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1964–67, POL 27–14 VIET S) Martin had received a proposal from the Indian Government for a meeting of the ICC in New Delhi. See *Foreign Relations*, 1964–1968, vol. IV, Document 351.

² The conversation was reported in telegram 1596 from Warsaw, December 30, 1966; for text, see *ibid.*, Document 355.

2. We do not recommend any new approach to Rapacki or any revision of our offer of December 24.³ The question remains, however, whether we should continue to refrain from bombing within ten miles of the center of Hanoi.

3. Meanwhile, we have disturbing information that—in addition to the Italians and the Soviets—the Poles have given the Pope “all details” as of approximately December 23, and that on December 23 the Poles gave U Thant an account of events through December 16.⁴ Finally, the Canadians informed us yesterday (January 2)⁵ that on December 28 U Thant had “in utmost confidence” informed the Canadian UN representative of the account the Poles had given him on December 23.

4. We do not know exactly what the Pope has been told, but it is reasonable to suppose that it is the same as the account to U Thant and the Canadians. This we do have, and the full Canadian report is attached as Tab A. While generally accurate in chronology, this report certainly gives the impression that we torpedoed the possibility of direct talks by our bombings. It glosses over completely Rapacki’s haggling between December 5 and December 11 on the interpretation question, and it omits completely all the events since December 16, including our undertaking of December 24.

5. In the light of these known disclosures, we believe the danger is now acute that the Pope, U Thant, and the Canadians all believe we were badly in the wrong. There is a second, and almost equally serious, danger—that the widening of the circle may lead at any moment to a public disclosure in some fashion highly unfavorable to us. U Thant in particular is emotional and not always discreet, and however closely the matter may have been held in all three quarters (not to mention Rome), a leak or intentional disclosure is now all too likely.

6. For these reasons alone, *we now recommend* that we given the Pope, U Thant, and the Canadians a full account of the whole episode up to this point, along the lines of Tab B.⁶ In the case of the Pope and U Thant, Goldberg and our Ambassador in Rome should handle this—

³ See *ibid.*, Document 351.

⁴ Also reported in telegram 1596 from Warsaw; see footnote 2 above.

⁵ Rusk discussed the Marigold initiative with Canadian Ambassador C.S.A. Ritchie on January 2. Tab A not printed, is the memorandum of conversation of the meeting.

⁶ Tab B, not printed, was a draft of a full account of Marigold to be given to the Pope, U Thant, and the Canadians. The British and the Italians also received briefings. Instructions for and reports of these briefings are in telegram 3458 from USUN, January 3; memorandum for the record, January 5; telegram 114278 to Rome, January 6; and telegram 112886 to Rome, January 8. (All National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/MARIGOLD)

without indicating our knowledge that they already have some information—on the basis that we believe they should have a full account. With the Canadians, who have come to us virtually asking for a full picture, we would simply be providing this to them.

7. The second immediate action question concerns our bombing pattern. Even though Rapacki assumes Marigold is dead, it is possible that Soviet intervention could still bring about some forward motion. We have given the Soviets a strong justification of our line of conduct (Bundy to Zinchuk on December 22 and 27, Thompson briefly to Dobrynin on December 30),⁷ including a full statement of our undertaking not to bomb within ten miles of the center of Hanoi. Even though the Soviets (Dobrynin to Thompson) purport not to understand our actions, they apparently do understand our difficulty with the Poles, and if the situation remains undramatic with respect to the bombing for an additional period, it is just possible that they would be able to get something going again. I myself will be talking to Dobrynin within the next two or three days and will spell out our basic willingness for bilateral talks, with a full explanation of why we have acted as we have up to this point. This hope alone would warrant continuing our undertaking with respect to Hanoi. Moreover, with U Thant emotional, any renewal of bombing in the Hanoi area might drive him over the edge and cause him to make a public disclosure.

8. Indeed, we believe that the over-all situation should cause us not only to refrain from bombing within ten miles of the center of Hanoi but to avoid for the time being any dramatic attacks on North Vietnam, particularly if these may involve civilian casualties. I have asked Secretary McNamara to review current authorizations to see if this guideline would require any change. *He joins me in recommending:*

- a. Adhering to the undertaking not to bomb within ten miles of the center of Hanoi.
- b. Avoiding any dramatic attacks on the lines defined above.

9. A third, and somewhat lesser, question concerns the Indian suggestion for a meeting of the ICC nations in the near future. The Canadians have specifically asked for an expression of our attitude on this initiative in view of Marigold. I have told them tentatively that we believed the ICC project has merit in any event, since it might open the way to discussions on Cambodia or other less sensitive topics. As to the poles, Gronouski has told Rapacki that the ICC project could be useful and could also serve to camouflage anything that may happen under Marigold. To the Indians we have consistently encouraged the

⁷ See *Foreign Relations, 1964–1968*, vol. IV, Document 354.

project.⁸ In light of the specific Canadian requests, *I recommend* that we now reiterate in categorical terms our favorable attitude, to all three nations.

10. In summary, we recommend the following actions:⁹

A. Informing the Pope, U Thant, and the Canadians fully on Marigold.

B. Maintaining our undertaking not to bomb within ten miles of the center of Hanoi, and avoiding any dramatic bombing attacks elsewhere in North Vietnam.

C. Reiterating to the Canadians, Poles, and Indians that we take a completely favorable view of a possible ICC initiative.

Dean Rusk¹⁰

⁸ On January 4 Secretary of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs T.N. Kaul met with the DRV Consul General in New Delhi. The Consul General asserted that "if America stops bombing of North Vietnam unconditionally and indefinitely, this would lead to cessation of hostilities and other steps." The Indians considered the Consul General's statement "more than a whisper" and told Ambassador to India Chester Bowles that Washington should respond to this overture. (Telegram 113614, January 6; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 27-14 VIET/NIRVANA) On January 13 Kaul received word from the Indian Consul in Hanoi that the North Vietnamese had called for a quiet extension of the Tet cease-fire, after which the United States and South Vietnam could enter into negotiations with the NLF, the conclusion of which the DRV would abide by. (Telegram 10032 from New Delhi, January 13; *ibid.*) However, news of Kaul's intercessions reached the press that day. Given North Vietnamese sensitivities, the publicity effectively ended the channel. (Telegram 118714 to New Delhi, January 13, and telegram 10228 from New Delhi, January 18; *ibid.*) On January 30 Bowles reported that the North Vietnamese Consul told Kaul that Hanoi was "prepared" to enter into negotiations once the bombing of North Vietnam ended. The Government of India was considered the DRV statement to have been a "serious move reflecting a genuine desire of Hanoi govt to reach a settlement acceptable to both sides." (Telegram 10807 from New Delhi, January 30; *ibid.*)

⁹ None of these recommendations is checked, although apparently were approved at the luncheon meeting.

¹⁰ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

5. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, January 3, 1967, 7:10 p.m.

Mr. President:

The reason this improbable message interests me is because while recognizing all the reasons Hanoi might wish to sweat us out through 1968, I have come to believe it conceivable, if not probable, that they are trying to get out of the war but don't know how.²

By "don't know how" I mean they cannot openly negotiate with us. They must have a deal which saves them minimum face with the NLF and the Chinese to announce before negotiations are acknowledged. They lose their bargaining leverage if they are known to be negotiating, because the NLF might bug out.³

If this is so, the message we should send back is this, and no more: Your message to Salisbury has been delivered. You will be hearing from us soon.

We should then send a direct message via your friend, Ne Win in a sealed envelope.⁴ It should be a direct communication, unopened, without intermediaries, between the U.S. Government and Hanoi. It could restate the kind of settlement we would envisage, but its major message should be technical; namely, that we believe a secure facility could be provided for our emissaries to meet without diplomatic or

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Sunflower, Vol. I. Top Secret; Literally Eyes Only.

² Reference is to the message from Pham Van Dong delivered via Salisbury; see Document 3. The outgoing Vietnamese Ambassador told Rusk and Unger that Dong's statements did not represent a "significant change" in the DRV position but instead "was a trial balloon launched to test Communist China's reaction." (Memorandum of conversation, January 9; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL US–VIET S) As a follow-up to Goldberg's statement of September 22, 1966, offering a bombing halt in exchange for private assurances from the North Vietnamese that they would promptly de-escalate the fighting, on December 31 the President had offered to meet the Vietnamese Communists "any time and anywhere." (*Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1966*, Book II, p. 1464)

³ Rostow added the final sentence by hand.

⁴ On January 5 Rostow sent a draft letter to Rusk for his approval. He stressed that the letter had "no status" and that the President knew about it but had not seen it. In the letter the President called on Ho Chi Minh to arrange for direct and secret talks at a neutral and secure site, preferably in Burma. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Marigold, Vol. II) The letter was not sent. Burmese President Ne Win's interest came about through the intercession of his fellow countryman U Thant. In a December 31, 1966, letter, Goldberg had requested that U Thant ascertain "what tangible response" the DRV would undertake following a cessation of bombing. For text, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1966*, pp. 895–896.

journalistic knowledge, close to Rangoon. We have faith in the security and integrity of Ne Win in providing such a facility. It would be close enough so that courier service to their embassy and ours in Rangoon, providing secure communications to both parties, could be available.

We have canvassed all the other possibilities; but Rangoon appears the best place. Ne Win, after your conversations, would be reliable and willing to keep out of the act as an intermediary. It is a military dictatorship with effective control. There is no substantial Western press corps. Even then, I am confident that the right way to mount it is out in the country.

Strangely enough, just before lunch today I spoke to Sec. Rusk and Sec. McNamara about the need to mount such a direct communication with Hanoi. Perhaps Moscow would do; but I have the strong feeling that these fellows in Hanoi may want to talk to us without Poles, Italians, Canadians, British, or even Russians in the act.

Be clear, I don't give this very high odds. But I have had the nagging feeling that they could well be in a position of wanting to get out and not knowing how. I can even reconstruct the reasons for this view.

Therefore, I think it is worth a try.⁵

Walt

⁵ Rostow added a handwritten postscript: "A full scenario, prepared some days ago, is attached." It is not printed.

6. Letter From the Commander of the Fleet Marine Force, Pacific (Krulak) to Secretary of Defense McNamara¹

San Francisco, January 4, 1967.

Dear Mr. McNamara:

I have just come from Vietnam where, as always, there is a lot of talk concerning what we need to do the job. The views vary greatly. In many cases they derive from what I regard as faulty reasoning or unjustified assumptions. Let me tell you what I mean.

¹ Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, McNamara Vietnam Files: FRC 77-0075, Vietnam (January and February 1967). Top Secret.

The nature, length and intensity of past wars have largely been functions of the capabilities of the antagonists. Both sides did everything they could to win, using all the ingenuity and all the resources at their disposal. In the Vietnam war, this is not the case. Each adversary has the capability to do more than he is doing, and the length and nature of the war are heavily influenced by national judgements as to what type and intensity of action best suits their purposes.

It is this unused capability that has made it so difficult to estimate the nature of the war even a few months in the future. The opponents have exhibited this fact by matching bets time and again, and each time the result has been a state of equilibrium at a higher level of intensity.

Equilibrium, as a matter of fact, is one of the dominant characteristics of the war. Either the new actions of one contestant, or the counteractions of his adversary, have created a succession of military plateaus. The plateaus have been the basis for miscalculations, sometimes giving the illusion of progress when actually no absolute progress is being attained. Examples of U.S. decisions leading to plateau changes are the initial introduction of ground forces, the initiation of air attacks against NVN, the use of SAC aircraft, and anti-infiltration ground and air action in Laos. Examples of enemy decisions which have generated plateaus at higher levels are attacks against U.S. shipping, growth in infiltration, the increased use of USSR munitions and advisors in NVN, and the attacks of U.S. aircraft by MIGs. A recent example of a plateau change was the enemy decision to make extensive use of the DMZ as a sanctuary, and the U.S. decision to counter this move by taking selective action against enemy forces and bases in the hitherto proscribed DMZ.

In the main, the enemy has decided the plateau on which we fight, although our power is vastly greater than his. Ours has largely been a reactive role; hoping for the enemy to come to terms at the current level of conflict, while preparing to punish him more intensely in case he does not. Consequently, any valid projection of force requirements must be preceded by an estimate not only of what the enemy can do, but of what he is most likely to do next.

But it goes further than that. Conclusions as to how much and what kind of power we need to commit must also be affected by the contribution of our allies. And, in this regard, I believe that inadequate emphasis has been placed on the resolution of the GVN, its willingness and its capability to bear its share of the burden. The visit which I concluded yesterday underscored my earlier conclusions that the GVN forces are not now contributing to the war to the full extent that they are capable. The consequences of this condition are evident. Our progress in large operations, counterguerrilla operations and pacification is slowed by the failure of GVN forces to assume a more active

correlated role in these undertakings. Although more U.S. power is needed in RVN, any deductions respecting the magnitude of the needed increase will be influenced by conclusions regarding the capabilities and willingness of GVN forces to participate more extensively in a mutual GVN/U.S. effort.

So we must not only estimate what the enemy can and will do, but must conclude also just how much more our Vietnamese allies can and will contribute. Wound up in these two estimates is an array of variables, all having a direct effect upon any quantification of requirements or calculation of time needed to achieve our objectives. Taking departure from the situation described earlier relating to uncommitted resources, here are a few of the variables which give me trouble:

—What is the USSR going to do? Will she add to the 1500 technicians already in NVN? Will she send more men to make the GCI and SA-2 systems more effective? Will she send a better family of radars? Will she send replacements for lost MIG-21s? Will she fly them in action, as in the Korean War? Will she send more oil? More trucks? Or, in a contrary vein, will she weary of changing her Five Year Plans, back off and let Ho Chi Minh and the Chicoms go it alone?

—What are Mao and Lin Piao going to do? Will the current level of Chinese influence in NVN increase? Will they add to the 40,000 men they have invested now, and send tactical units into NVN? Will they send them into RVN? Will they create a diversion in Laos or Thailand? Or will their internal problems so preoccupy them as to cause a gross reduction in Chicom effort?

—What is Ho Chi Minh going to do? Will he shoot the works, try and send six divisions south to seize control of part of RVN? Will he send his Beagles south? Will he send more forces into Laos? Or into Thailand? Will he use the forces in the vicinity of the DMZ to try and make a Dien Bien Phu out of Khe Sanh? Or will he conclude, since he cannot win, that he should put his faith in protracted guerrilla and subversive war and count on weariness to defeat the U.S.?

—What is the GVN going to do? Is the existing government going to last? Will they do the sensible things necessary to curb inflation? Will the military continue at its present pace, or will it begin to operate somewhere near its practical capability? Will they get honestly into Revolutionary Development on the big scale now contemplated? Or will they, more and more, tend to "Let George Do It"?

Each of these variables can serve as a determinant of the cost of the war to use, and of the time it will take to bring it to a military end. And the frustrating thing is that none of them is rejectable, out of hand, because of impracticability or unreality. Thus, simply by a choice of assumptions related to these variables, one can generate conclusions which bear no similarity one to the other. And that, it seems to me, has

been the greatest defect of our military planning up to now—the arbitrary assumption of constants which subsequent events have proven not to be constant. Indeed, there seems to be only one constant, which is this;—it flies in the face of our Vietnam experience to assume that any factor will continue unchanged for long.

An example of this inconstancy is the recent major change in enemy strategy. During 1965 and the first half of 1966 the enemy put emphasis on massing his forces—transition into Phase III of the revolutionary war cycle. This was climaxed in June of this year, when he tried us on for size in large scale maneuver involving thousands of people. We met him head-on in Hastings, in the DMZ area, and Attleboro,² in the Laos border–high plateau area. He took a severe beating each time, and even the most cement headed Communist could see from these experiences that there was no chance of defeating us in mass, combined arms battle. They had to change, and they did.

First, it is clear that, without risking their own major formations, the Reds are now trying to present us with a continual threat of large unit involvement, by maintaining strong forces near the borders, in the Laos and DMZ sanctuaries. In doing so, they hope to draw our ground strength into the inhospitable hinterland and away from the key populated areas, where the beginnings of Revolutionary Development have begun to worry them. Second, they are intensifying guerrilla warfare, terrorism and subversion. Their purposes in this are two-fold, to thwart our Revolutionary Development efforts and, of equal importance, to present us with close quarters combat circumstances where, because of the great population density, our supporting arms are of minimum avail.

There is no doubt that the enemy is doing both of these things. They are to be found today in strength in the Laos and DMZ sanctuaries. There is evidence of continued activity of NVN units near the borders. There are small trans-border forays to hold our attention, but there are no mass adventures such as Attleboro or Hastings. Their attitude in the border areas is largely defensive.

And there has been an upsurge in terrorism and guerrilla activity in the populated regions. Prisoners in the Danang–Chu Lai area tell us, over and again, that this is what we now have to look forward to. The VC want to subvert and seize control of those people who have moved to our side, and they want to confront us with a surfeit of land mines, ambushes, snipers and raids; in other words, with the close quarters misery war where they know the casualty ratio is the least favorable to us, and our supporting arms are least effective on them.

² Attleboro and Hastings were large U.S. military offensives in Vietnam launched during 1966.

In doing these things, I think Ho Chi Minh has made a sagacious decision and a far reaching one where we are concerned. He is putting his hopes on manpower erosion and protracted combat among the people, expecting that the demand for more fighting men to meet the needs of the slow-moving guerrilla war will cause U.S. resolution to waver.

There is little doubt that more fighting men are going to be needed in countering the renewed enemy guerrilla/terrorism program. Some of these additional men must be Americans,—for leadership and example, to apply the “monkey see, monkey do” influence we have on our Vietnamese military counterparts. However, the great majority of the soldiers who sit in the hamlets, day and night, to protect the people, must be Vietnamese. The thousands of nightly counterguerrilla patrols have to be conducted by Vietnamese; not by Americans. We must show them how, as we have in the past; we must encourage them and, in a limited degree, we must go with them. But the major manpower contribution to the guerrilla war and Revolutionary Development should be theirs. We will have a major task of our own, protecting the flanks of the ARVN engaged in Revolutionary Development and in destroying Viet Cong bases and resources.

This Revolutionary Development is what the Vietnamese should be doing. It is within their competence and their capability, but they are not doing it. Right now there are about 190 battalions or battalion equivalents in the ARVN. I doubt if ten percent are involved in protecting the people from the harassment, depredations and oppression of the Viet Cong. Most of them are busy reacting to the initiatives of the Main Force or involved in static defensive activities of limited productivity. I know this is true in the I Corps where, of the 32 ARVN battalions, no more than four are really deep into Revolutionary Development. They need to be gotten into pacification on a gross basis.

The plans for this transition are good. During my current visit to Vietnam I became well acquainted with the details of the ARVN RD program in I Corps. As a plan it cannot be faulted, but there is a long reach between plan and fulfillment. It is a tremendous change for the Vietnamese military, and the road is rutted with ignorance, cynicism, oriental face and the ghosts of earlier, now-defunct, programs. I really do not look to see the ARVN come around to doing what they ought to do, without greater compulsion than is now being exerted on them.

I say all this as preamble to these conclusions:

—We do need more U.S. people in Vietnam—but the numbers are going to depend greatly upon just how much the Vietnamese military choose to do for themselves. This is the great unanswered question of 1967.

—The real and greater need, on the U.S. side, is for power, more than people. The Reds will happily match us—five or ten for one—in

successive people plateaus, but there is no sense in competing on those terms.

—As to the need for more U.S. power, I mean the infusion of things;—things that show our resolution; things that cause the enemy losses of men and resources, at little cost to us. He is counting on the flesh and blood loss ratio becoming unbearable to us. We must frustrate him by eschewing the high U.S. manpower cost programs, which he can counter, in favor of low U.S. manpower cost programs, which he cannot. Examples? A quantum increase in the Arc Light effort to harry the VC bases in RVN and to help disrupt their logistics; a ten-fold growth in air interdiction of the Laos routes and of the DMZ area; constant bombardment from the sea of every sensitive point on the enemy communications, transportation and air defense system within naval gun range in the southern waist of NVN; greatly increased progressive and selective aerial destruction of NVN transportation, military logistic support and power resources.³ These exemplify actions which we can afford more than manpower, which strike the Reds where it hurts them most, and which show them that we are not fooling.

—Meanwhile, persuasive leverage must be applied to get the Vietnamese military busy doing what they have never done and have never wanted to do before—protect the people. So far they have only talked about it and, while the talk is modestly encouraging, it still has had no effect on the Viet Cong. They have to be made to produce in this area, else the manpower burden will be ours by default.

—The leverage needed to make the GVN get seriously into the Revolutionary Development business is at hand. We have it, if we will use it, in the form of greater U.S. control over the distribution of military medical and commodity imports. In my belief, the GVN get their hands on munitions and civilian goods too quickly, too easily and with too few restraints. While it will be necessary to preserve their face by exerting our increased controls in an unobtrusive manner, we can still make plain that the things they most want are going to materialize only as we see them doing what we want them to do in Revolutionary Development. This material leverage, moreover, should be applied mainly through the interface with the U.S. military, who have a better dialog with their RVN counterparts than do the civilians. One practical step would be to hand over the U.S. part of the Saigon port problem wholly to the military.

³ The expanded bombing would be carried out by B-52s to be deployed at U Tapao air force base in Thailand. (SNIE 10-67, "Reactions to a Possible US Action," January 5; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 27 VIET S)

—Finally, we have to generate a comprehensive plan of campaign; and not just a plan for the ground campaign or the air campaign, not even a plan just for the overall military campaign. Rather, it should integrate everything—the plans for our political and economic operations in Vietnam, plans for employment of all U.S. military elements, plans for the RVNAF and plans for employment of those U.S. and GVN nonmilitary and quasi-military activities which are involved in Revolutionary Development. It should derive from an analysis and comparison of all of the possible strategic plateaus, in terms of the results expected in each case, versus the corresponding hazards and costs involved. And it should be a sensible plan, in terms of time; not going off into the blue of the distant future, but being revised and updated—as a mandatory matter—every six months.

Happy New Year. May 1967 bring us much nearer to the honorable Peace for which we all pray. I believe it can.

Sincerely,

Brute

P.S. I will be in Washington on 26, 27 and 28 January, and look forward to the opportunity of seeing you.⁴

⁴ In a January 26 memorandum to the President, Komer advised Johnson to meet with Krulak, who had just returned from two trips to Vietnam and was “perhaps our best counter-insurgency man in uniform,” in order to hear his report on the situation in Vietnam. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXIV, Memos (A)) Komer wanted the Marines’ Combined Action Company “technique” in I Corps to be adopted by the Army in the III or IV Corps of South Vietnam. (Ibid., Files of Robert Komer, RWK Chron File, January–March 1967) The President met with Krulak on January 27, 12:01–12:19 p.m. (Ibid., President’s Daily Diary) No record of the meeting has been found.

7. Memorandum of Meeting¹

Washington, January 5, 1967, 3 p.m.

PARTICIPANTS

Eugene Rostow
W. Averell Harriman
Henry Cabot Lodge
William Bundy
John McNaughton
Joseph Sisco
Benjamin Read
Leonard Unger
Chester L. Cooper

Rusk–Dobrynin Conversation

Mr. Read briefly outlined the highlights of the 2-1/2 hour conversation between Secretary Rusk and Ambassador Dobrynin. Mr. Read identified two points that he felt were new: The Secretary's suggestion that we and the Soviets meet to see if we couldn't come to some joint agreement on the points at issue; and the Secretary's query to Dobrynin on what Moscow would do if bombing stopped. On both points Dobrynin seemed interested and receptive, but it was apparent that he had to wait for instructions before pursuing them further. The Secretary gave Dobrynin a revision of the "14 points" (originally developed in connection with the peace offensive a year ago). Dobrynin, speaking personally, stated that there seemed to be little in the 14 points with which the Soviets could not agree. The MemCon will be made available to participants.²

Mr. McNaughton reported on a luncheon conversation he had with Mr. Zinchuk of the Soviet Embassy (Mr. Read is to furnish the MemCon of this).³ Zinchuk suggested that we let the Warsaw exercise "cool off" for a while, but felt that direct talks between the North Vietnamese

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/MARIGOLD. Secret; Eyes Only Participants; Marigold. No drafting information appears on the memorandum. This meeting of the Negotiations Committee was held in Harriman's office; it is also summarized in a January 6 memorandum from Harriman to the President and Rusk. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Amb. Harriman—Negotiations Committee)

² A memorandum of conversation of the January 4 meeting between Rusk and Dobrynin, January 5, is *ibid.*, Files of Walt Rostow, Box 9, Marigold–Sunflower. For the Fourteen Points, as expounded by Vice President Hubert Humphrey and other officials in early 1966, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1966*, pp. 740–742; for the Ten Points, which were suggested U.S. negotiating positions put forward by Lewandowski during the Marigold exercise in December 1966, see *Foreign Relations, 1964–1968*, vol. IV, Document 322.

³ Not found.

and the Americans would be productive; NLF participation could come later.

Instructions for Ambassador Thompson

It was agreed that key documents, including the “package for Hanoi”, should be pouched to Moscow as soon as possible (these documents are now on their way).⁴ It was also agreed that a message should be forwarded to Thompson for receipt on his arrival which would give him an up-to-date account of the state of play. Another message containing suggestions and instructions for his talks with Soviet leaders should await the playback from the Rusk/Dobrynin discussion and elaboration of the Salisbury interview with Pham Van Dong.

Harrison Salisbury

Salisbury has declined the invitation to use British code facilities in Hanoi to provide additional information on his interview with Pham Van Dong in favor of a personal conversation with the Secretary. The timing of his return to the U.S. is uncertain, but it appears that he will be in Washington on or before January 11.⁵

Mr. Unger indicated that a preliminary reading of the Mai Van Bo interview showed no basic change in the DRV position.⁶

Sainteny

It was generally agreed that Sainteny should proceed to Hanoi “to take soundings” if deGaulle permits him to do so. The Secretary should be informed of the judgment of the Committee and, subject to his judgment on timing, a message should be forwarded from the Governor

⁴ The “package” was a letter that the Embassy in Moscow would deliver directly to the DRV Embassy on January 10 proposing confidential discussions that would lead to formal peace talks. See Document 8.

⁵ See Document 3.

⁶ See Document 3. On January 5 Bo amplified his remarks before a meeting of the Congress of the French Communist Party by assuring that the DRV would “examine and study” U.S. proposals for peace after a halt to the bombing. See *The New York Times*, January 6, 1967. State Department spokesman Robert McCloskey responded during a news conference the same day with the following statement: “Our position has been repeatedly made clear. We are prepared to have talks without any conditions with North Viet-Nam at any time. We are prepared to order a cessation of all bombing of North Viet-Nam the moment we are assured, privately or otherwise, that this step will be answered promptly by a corresponding and appropriate de-escalation on the other side. This could occur before talks started, or it could be the first order of business in such talks.” His statement is printed in *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1967*, pp. 828–829.

through John Dean of our Embassy suggesting that Sainteny make the trip.⁷

Japanese Contacts with North Vietnamese in Moscow

Mr. Bundy suggested that we ask the Japanese Ambassador in Moscow to query his North Vietnamese colleague about Salisbury's report that Pham Van Dong is being more flexible on negotiations to clarify our position with respect to reciprocal action in connection with a bombing cessation (i.e., to indicate that we want something more than an agreement to talk), and to correct the record with respect to the North Vietnamese claim that there are no North forces in the South. We should also indicate to the Japanese that we would welcome contacts between their Ambassador to Moscow and the New DRV Ambassador. (Mr. Bundy is to handle.)⁸

Contacts with the NLF

Ambassador Lodge felt that any American contacts with NLF representatives should be secret, unofficial, and deniable, although, by and large, he advised against any independent approaches to the Front. He felt that the NLF had little direct control over the Viet Cong; the Viet Cong are directed from Hanoi rather than by the NLF. The Front, in turn, is under the control of Hanoi, primarily through the "power of assassination". Ambassador Lodge felt that the GVN would be ready to talk to the NLF "when the time was right". The GVN feels that Hanoi is ready to continue the war at least for another year and for this reason there would be no point in early contacts with the Front. In any case, it would be preferable to wait until the Viet Cong or Hanoi takes the initiative to seek us out. [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*]

⁷ Jean Sainteny was a former French Government official with long experience in Indochina and an associate of President Charles de Gaulle. Sainteny had met with Ho Chi Minh in July 1966, and planned to return to Hanoi in early 1967 at the request of the U.S. Government. On January 20 President de Gaulle vetoed the trip because he doubted the sincerity of the U.S. Government with respect to negotiations. (Memorandum from Harriman to the President, January 24; Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Harriman Papers, Special Files, Public Service, Subject Files, Johnson, Lyndon 1967) According to a memorandum of conversation dated January 30, Sainteny later told Senator Robert Kennedy (D-NY) that the North Vietnamese would never regard a simple bombing cessation as sufficient for peace talks if it was not permanent and accompanied by a troop withdrawal and an acceptance of the Four Points as a basis for a political settlement. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXV, Memos (B)).

⁸ During July, September, and December 1966, as well as during January 1967, the Japanese Ambassador in Moscow carried on discussions with his DRV counterpart. The Japanese Government characterized the response of the DRV representative to its overtures as the "standard line." (Telegram 118870 to Tokyo, January 14; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S)

contacts with the NLF and SVN contacts with individuals of the Front, however, were desirable.

Before we or the GVN can have any effective talks with the Viet Cong or the North Vietnamese, Ambassador Lodge felt that we had to demonstrate our ability to break up the hard core terrorist apparatus. Although some modest steps were being taken to do this, we still were far from developing an effective operation. "We don't even know what happens to those hard core terrorists who have been caught"; apparently many of these who were imprisoned have escaped.

Ambassador Harriman felt that the differences between the NLF and Hanoi were probably greater than intelligence analysts tended to believe—pointing to differences within the Polet Bureau [*Politburo*] even under Stalin.

Mr. McNaughton suggested that the GVN would score many points internationally and in the U.S. if they would agree to "unconditional talks" with the NLF. Ambassador Lodge emphasized the difficulties such a course would have for the GVN and Mr. Bundy stressed that we must accept and live with the proposition that the GVN cannot talk with the "NLF qua NLF" publicly. He could envisage contacts by U.S. representatives, or by Ky himself at an appropriate time.

It was agreed that the question of dealing with individuals of the NLF should be part of the program of national reconciliation.

It was also agreed that Mr. Cooper should explore the whole question of NLF–GVN–US contacts.

Miscellaneous Items

Mr. Cooper is to get in touch with Mr. Colby to see if some contacts could be arranged with the DRV and NLF Delegations to the French Communist Party Congress currently in session. (This has been done.)

It was generally agreed that, in the Marigold operation, Hanoi was trying to see how far it could go in getting U.S. concessions before being confronted with the necessity of talking to us. It was also suggested that Rapacki himself may have been less than forthright in his handling of the talks (Ambassador Lodge indicated that Lewandowsky probably felt that he had been let down by the conduct of the talks in Warsaw).

Mr. Unger indicated that the question of a 7-day Tet truce, which was recommended by State, was under current consideration in DOD. Governor Harriman indicated his personal view that, from the point of view of world opinion, a 7-day truce would be desirable.

8. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in the Soviet Union¹

Washington, January 5, 1967, 4:46 p.m.

112967. Ref: Moscow 2887.² You should seek appointment directly with departing NVN Ambassador and deliver the following message:³

“Although the USG has attempted to deliver the following message to the North Vietnamese authorities indirectly in the last few days, we would appreciate it if he would make sure that those authorities are informed directly by him upon his return to Hanoi as follows: The USG places the highest priority on finding a mutually agreeable, completely secure arrangement for exchanging communications with the government of the DRV about the possibilities of achieving a peaceful settlement of the Vietnamese dispute. If the DRV is willing to explore such possibilities with us we will attempt to meet any suggestions they have to offer regarding the time and place of such discussions and we will be prepared to receive such information directly from the North Vietnamese through direct diplomatic contacts at any capital where we both maintain posts or otherwise.”

Slug any reply Nodis/Sunflower.

Rusk

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER. Top Secret; Priority; Sunflower. Drafted by Read; cleared by Bundy, Kohler, Rostow, Katzenbach, and Walsh; and approved by Rusk.

² Dated January 5. (Ibid., POL US–USSR)

³ Chargé John Guthrie requested that the Soviet Embassy’s First Secretary, Alexander Akalovsky, deliver a request to the DRV Embassy for an appointment with North Vietnamese Ambassador Kinh. Hoang Man’ Tu, First Secretary of the DRV Embassy in Moscow, received the request and promised to pass it on to the North Vietnamese Ambassador. (Telegram 2916 from Moscow, January 6; *ibid.*, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER) It read: “Dear Mr. Ambassador: I have been instructed to deliver to you personally a confidential message from my government. I am prepared to call on you for that purpose at your earliest convenience. Please let me know when you would be available to receive me.” On January 9 Kinh responded that his Embassy’s Minister-Counselor, Le Chang, would meet with him the next day. On January 10 Le Chang accepted the message Guthrie was forwarding, which indicated the U.S. desire to engage in confidential discussions leading to a peaceful settlement. Le Chang stated that it would be passed on to his Ambassador (Telegram 2966 from Moscow, January 10; *ibid.*)

9. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Poland¹

Washington, January 6, 1967, 8:11 p.m.

114370. Ref: Warsaw's 1646.²

1. In view of complex of developments relating to Viet-Nam problem we would like you to avoid for the present any further initiatives along lines section 2 reftel.³

2. If Poles come back to you on this matter please make clear, as you have already stated to them, that idea described Para 6 was entirely your own and that neither before presenting it nor since have you received any instructions in this regard.⁴ Naturally you would want to hear any reactions the Poles may be prepared to offer and report them to your Government.

3. Discussion Para 6 reftel concerning Phase A and B package prompts us to offer following clarification. It has been our conception that the totality of de-escalatory actions in Phases A and B taken together would be approximately equal in importance on both sides. In other words Hanoi's action under Phase B would be expected to be generally equivalent to our actions in Phase B plus our cessation of bombing of North Viet-Nam.⁵

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/MARIGOLD. Top Secret; Priority; Nodis; Marigold. Drafted by Unger, cleared by Bundy and Rostow, and approved by Walsh.

² Telegram 1646 from Warsaw, January 6, reported a January 5 conversation between Ambassador Gronouski and Director-General of the Polish Foreign Service Michalowski relating to the breakdown of the Marigold initiative in Warsaw during the previous December. (Ibid., POL 27 VIET S)

³ In this section of telegram 1646, Gronouski proposed that Poland get both sides to agree on specific and verifiable de-escalatory actions before actual direct talks between the United States and the DRV took place. Michalowski refused, citing Poland's desire to remain as an intermediary and to avoid direct involvement.

⁴ In paragraph 6 of telegram 1646, Gronouski suggested that Under Secretary Katzenbach meet with Michalowski during the latter's upcoming unofficial visit to the United States.

⁵ The Phase A–Phase B formula for getting the North Vietnamese to the negotiating table arose out of the Marigold contacts during the fall of 1966. It was an attempt to allow for mutual de-escalation, a move that Washington considered essential but Hanoi regarded as placing undue preconditions upon its involvement in peace negotiations, in two steps. In the first phase, the United States would cease bombing the DRV and talks would begin. The halt would be followed by the second phase, a series of mutually-agreed upon actions by both sides that would mark a reduction in hostilities.

4. We are not suggesting that you take initiative with Poles to make the clarification along lines of preceding paragraph but rather that you bear this in mind in case, in any subsequent conversation, you have reason to believe Poles do not understand Phase A and B package in this sense.

Rusk

10. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Rostow) to Secretary of State Rusk¹

Washington, January 6, 1967.

Mr. Secretary:

My concern is this: we are, in diplomatic parlance, "following up" every lead we get back through the channel which generates or communicates the lead.

The net effect in Hanoi must be to convey an image of confusion and uncertainty similar to the image of confusion and uncertainty that we have about their position.

We have many indications from the Soviet Union and others that a direct bilateral clandestine approach is what is required.

Moreover, they must regard us—the greatest power in the world—as the critical factor in whether a deal livable for them can be brought off.

As I said this morning, in a curious way they are looking for some kind of guidance and leadership from us in this murky, delicately balanced situation. It is for that reason that I still recommend the letter, a draft of which I sent over yesterday.² It offers the best opportunity I can perceive for crystallizing the decision in Hanoi.

W. W. Rostow³

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Sunflower, Vol. II. Top Secret; Personal; Eyes Only.

² See footnote 4, Document 5.

³ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

11. Editorial Note

On January 10, 1967, President Johnson delivered his annual message to Congress. In the State of the Union speech, the President stated his intention to recommend to Congress the passage of legislation enacting a surcharge of 6 percent on both corporate and individual taxes "to last for two years or for so long as the unusual expenditures associated with our efforts in Vietnam continue." The speech also demonstrated the President's frustration over the continuing war in Vietnam and his resolve to stay the course:

"I wish I could report to you that the conflict is almost over. This I cannot do. We face more cost, more loss, and more agony. For the end is not yet. I cannot promise you that it will come this year—or come next year. Our adversary still believes, I think, tonight, that he can go on fighting longer than we can, and longer than we and our allies will be prepared to stand up and resist.

"Our men in the area—there are nearly 500,000 now—have borne well 'the burden and the heat of the day.' Their efforts have deprived the Communist enemy of the victory that he sought and that he expected two years ago. We have steadily frustrated his main forces. General Westmoreland reports that the enemy can no longer succeed on the battlefield.

"So I must say to you that our pressure must be sustained—and will be sustained—until he realizes that the war he started is costing him more than he can ever gain."

For full text of the speech, see *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1967*, Book I, pages 2–14.

12. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, January 10, 1967, 1200Z.

15287. 1. Lansdale visited Prime Minister Ky at Latter's invitation morning of Jan 9. Highlights of conversation follow.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 15–1 VIET S. Secret; Priority; Limdis. Received at 10:58 a.m. Repeated to CINCPAC for POLAD and passed to the White House, DOD, CIA, USIA, and NSA at 12:10 p.m.

2. Ky said Gen Co was becoming increasingly a problem and would have to be dealt with soon. General Vinh Loc had told Ky about a recent visit by Co to Pleiku where he made disparaging remarks about Ky and GVN to a number of ARVN officers he had assembled. This was merely latest of a long series of misbehaviors by Co. (Ky mentioned several, including Co's rapid promotion of his aide, which Ky said angered many younger ARVN officers.) When Lansdale asked Ky what he was going to do about Co, Ky replied quickly that only thing to do was to try Co, with major count being Co's corruption. Ky said Co has now made so much money that legal action would have to be taken to make him disgorge it. Ky said this would happen "very soon."

3. Lansdale remarked that he had heard Ky was starting to meet with members of Constituent Assembly and that recognition of their fine progress with Constitution is well merited.² Ky said he plans to have each bloc join him for dinner, a different bloc each week. He has already met with most of drafting committee, the Hoa Hao and the Catholics. He had had long discussion with drafting committee about problems of electing province chiefs, pointing out that Viet-Nam probably could not afford this during wartime without much more preparation. CA members replied that, while Ky's comments were realistic and true, it would be most difficult to resubmit provision for election of province and district chiefs to another vote in CA for its amendment. Drafting committee members said they would study way to add another provision to Constitution to effect that election of district and province chiefs is an accepted principle and charging elected President with task of holding these elections as soon as feasible.

4. Ky said that he had begun meeting CA members because Chief of State Thieu had not seemed to be too skillful in dealing with them. Lansdale remarked that he assumed Thieu and Ky were getting together more often since they now share the new place. Ky looked a little bemused at Lansdale's remark and, after a pause, said yes, but that he wanted to discuss a most sensitive matter. He then discussed the Presidency. He explained that Thieu was a very clever person, maneuvering carefully to become President but keeping way open to re-

² The Constituent Assembly drafted specific articles of the new Vietnamese Constitution during the period November 30–December 22, 1966, and currently was engaged in modifying the draft provisions. The major problems anticipated included the military government's ability to unilaterally change any of the component parts of the Constitution and the desire of members of the Assembly to continue functioning on an interim basis after the Constitution was promulgated. (Memorandum from Bundy to Rusk, January 3; Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXIII) In a January 10 memorandum to Rostow, Roche reviewed an advance copy of the Vietnamese constitution, drafted by the Constituent Assembly and obtained by CIA, and highlighted several structural flaws, including the lack of a required majority to elect a president, the emergency powers of the Assembly, election of provincial chiefs, and the stringent prohibition on the political activities of clergymen. (Ibid.)

turn to army as its commander in case it becomes clear to him that he cannot be elected. A number of people, including CA members, religious leaders and military men, had told Ky that Thieu could not be elected, that Thieu's reputation for being "clever" would be considerable political handicap at this point in Viet-Nam's history. Ky added that even Catholics had told him this, despite Thieu's being a Catholic. But Ky continued that it seems to be clearly indicated that a military man should become President. The war, the ravaged conditions in the country, and possibility of a negotiated peace, with 600,000 armed military suddenly facing civilian pursuits, all indicate that years just ahead in Viet-Nam are going to be very hard ones, requiring firmer leadership than possible from any civilian politicians known to him. Presidency will probably demand decisive actions, rather than skillful compromise along political lines, at least for next four years. For example, "democracy" or "freedom" will be empty words unless elected President also sees to it that GVN gives people social justice at same time, and this is revolutionary enough in Viet-Nam that it will be opposed by a number of groups that a politician usually needs. Thus, President should be a military man. The only two who are really eligible are Thieu and Ky. Thieu cannot be elected. That leaves Ky. Ky said that all corps and division commanders have asked him to run for Presidency. Many others have asked him to declare his intention to run so they can start organizing support for him. He said that 19 months as Prime Minister make him reluctant to accept political office, but if this is best way to serve Viet-Nam, he will become a candidate for President. Lansdale asked Ky for his assessment of southern support for him, since he is a northerner. Ky said a number of southern leaders had been urging him to run for President and had assured him of their support, as had leaders from the center. He felt being a northerner would not be too big an obstacle, particularly if he teamed up with a southerner as his Vice President. Ky stated that if he decides to run, most difficult immediate task will be so informing Thieu. Yet, Thieu probably would be able to return to army as its commander, and this might appeal to him. Ky said this matter would require considerable thought.

5. Other than as indicated above, Lansdale listened to Ky without comment.

6. We not informed whether Ambassador at present in Washington but assume Dept will bring this message to his attention. We are particularly disturbed at implication para 2 to effect that Ky talking about trying Co "very soon." While latter may not be healthy influence in govt today, he is certainly not pushover for Ky. Nor have we confidence that Ky is in position to make necessary arrangements and alliances required to bring down this prominent southerner. We assume at this point there is sufficient time remaining for Ambassador to discuss subject with Ky on his return, and we are watching developments

carefully. Problem with kind of statement he made to Lansdale is that it would enable Ky to say, after or during event, that he had informed us of his intentions.

7. Ky downgrading of Thieu Presidential possibilities, while upgrading his own, adds to unpleasant uncertainties which face us.

8. We would appreciate comments you may wish to provide at this juncture.

Porter

13. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, January 10, 1967, 3:50 p.m.

Mr. President:

Herewith talking points for your discussion with Cabot Lodge tomorrow, January 11, at 11:30 a.m.²

1. The next two months are critical and will set the pattern for a year we hope will prove decisive. *You are counting on him.*³

2. In particular, it is essential he use all the wisdom and skill of a lifetime in politics to help the South Vietnamese:

—find military-civilian agreement on the constitution and on the candidates for the national election;

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXIII, Memos. Secret. The notation "L" on the memorandum indicates that the President saw it.

² Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge was in the United States during early January for high-level consultations. The President actually saw Lodge from 12:06 to 12:50 p.m. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary) No other record of this meeting has been found.

³ Lodge had already expressed his desire to leave his post as Ambassador to South Vietnam in March. (Memorandum from Rostow to Johnson, January 4; *ibid.*, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXIV, Memos (B)) During his January 11 meeting with the President, Lodge presumably discussed his departure and replacement. In a January 11 letter to the President, Lodge suggested McGeorge Bundy, Robert McNamara, or Clark Clifford as possible nominees for the Saigon post. (Ibid., Files of Walt Rostow, Viet Nam—W.W. Rostow (1 of 2)) In a January 19 memorandum to the President, Komer also recommended McGeorge Bundy and advised that McNamara be the one to "feel Bundy out" on taking the job. (Ibid., Files of Robert Komer, Memos to the President, January–May 1967) In a separate memorandum to Johnson sent the same day, Komer added four other names for consideration: Ellsworth Bunker, Westmoreland, William Porter, and himself. (Ibid.)

—consolidate the moderate non-Communist majority into a national political alliance—or party—so that:

(1) Ky—or whoever—has a political base and national program when he runs: a truly new look.

(2) We have the beginnings of a party that can defeat the VC if they give up the war and enter politics.

None of us knows when the South Vietnamese may have to face that test. We must help them prepare now.

3. Keep close to Westy. No matter how it is organized, pacification requires intense military-civil cooperation. There is too much talk already of civil versus military attitudes and policies. Pacification is a two-fisted, military-civil job. Westy and Cabot should live in each other's pockets.

4. Moreover, Westy's influence over the Vietnamese military may be valuable to Cabot in finding a new political base in South Viet Nam. For these purposes, Cabot should regard Westy as a valuable political aide.

5. Encourage Ky, from his situation of strength, to reach out, communicate with, and be prepared to negotiate with the NLF. Tell him we are not going to sell out to the Communists and to operate from confidence, not fear.

6. You might indicate we shall be formulating a NSAM to crystallize our 1967 policy, after Bus Wheeler returns. You understand he has read it in draft.⁴ You hope he left behind his suggestions. (FYI: He's abroad; but we want him to feel you want him aboard.)

Walt

⁴ Not further identified.

14. Memorandum for the Record¹

Washington, January 10, 1967.

Michael Shenstone, First Secretary at the Canadian Embassy, came in this morning to report on developments with respect to the ICC. He

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/MARIGOLD. Top Secret; Marigold. Prepared by Cooper. Copies were sent to Harriman, Bundy, Read, and Jorden.

said there would be a “little meeting” of the ICC in New Delhi tomorrow, January 10. The Canadian and Polish Ambassadors would meet with Kaul, the Indian head of the ICC. This represented a change in position for the Poles since they had recently tried to postpone any such meeting until their new Ambassador arrived in New Delhi. Shenstone said that, according to their information, the Indians were planning to have the ICC recommend a stop to the bombing, a ceasefire, and a negotiations session—in sequence. The Indians hoped that the ICC would also review its mandate and its resources for the policing of a ceasefire and a settlement. The Indians apparently were encouraged by the Mai Van Bo and Pham Van Dong interviews.²

I told Shenstone that while we were very much in favor of an ICC meeting, a report along the lines the Indians proposed could hardly be very useful. I said that the recent North Vietnamese statements were hardly forthcoming, and even certain Communist countries claimed they were not a change in Hanoi’s position. To base an ICC set of recommendations on them would destroy the credibility of any ICC report here. More than that, any ICC recommendations that took a one-sided view on our stopping bombing would be counter-productive.

At the end of our session Shenstone said that they had reason to believe that the Indian Ambassador in Warsaw had some knowledge of the Marigold exercise. According to the Canadian Ambassador in Warsaw, his Indian colleague pointed out in December that they couldn’t expect the Poles to agree to an ICC meeting since the Poles were already negotiating directly with the Americans to establish talks with the North Vietnamese.

Chester L. Cooper³

Note: I have since been informed by telephone that the New Delhi meeting has been postponed because the Pole “had not received instructions”.⁴

² See Document 3.

³ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

⁴ On January 12 the Polish ICC representative rejected the idea of meeting in New Delhi. In a draft telegram to Warsaw, January 14, which was apparently sent, the Department concluded that statements made by NLF representative in Algeria Tran Hoi Nam to Ambassador John D. Jernegan, as well as statements communicated through other channels, including contacts by the Government of India, which linked bombing and a cessation of hostilities to the opening of talks, were the foundation for the Polish diplomat’s backing away. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Bundy Files: Lot 85 D 240, Top Secret—WPB Chron, Jan/Apr 1967) The Algerian connection to the NLF was known as Primrose; it was followed through mid-March without success. Additional documentation on Primrose is *ibid.*, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PRIMROSE.

15. Editorial Note

On January 10, 1967, Ambassador to Britain David K.E. Bruce informed Secretary of State Dean Rusk of concerns that Prime Minister Harold Wilson expressed privately to him regarding the use of the British Government as an intermediary in efforts to end the fighting in Vietnam. (Telegram 11895 to London, January 15; Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Marigold II) The problem arose in the aftermath of the mid-November 1966 visit to Moscow by British Foreign Secretary George Brown, an occasion during which he espoused (with U.S. Government concurrence) a two-stage proposal for ending hostilities and opening negotiations. He was not forewarned of the Marigold contact by the Johnson administration, but found out through the Soviets that the Poles had put forth the same package simultaneously. In a January 4 statement, the North Vietnamese had repudiated the British effort. See *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1967, pages 824+N825.

On January 12 Wilson sent a formal message to President Johnson expressing his dissatisfaction over the way that the administration had handled Brown's visit. Brown felt slighted by the fact that the U.S. Government did not tell him that it had given the proposal to Lewandowski 2 days prior to his departure for the Soviet Union. In addition, Wilson had grave reservations about the upcoming visit to London by Kosygin. As a consequence, the President approved Secretary Rusk's request that Chester Cooper, Special Assistant to Ambassador at Large W. Averell Harriman, brief Brown, and that Bruce brief Wilson on all aspects of Marigold. "I do not believe that we owe it to the British to keep them fully informed on every move in this game when 500,000 U.S. men are under arms and the British fighting contribution is zero," Rostow wrote to the President. "Nevertheless, keeping the British tolerably happy is part of the job." (Memorandum from Rostow to Johnson, January 16; Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Marigold II)

As reported in telegram 118905 to London, January 19, 4 days earlier Assistant Secretary Bundy apologized to Ambassador Patrick Dean over the American misstep. He assured Dean that the "Brown message was the clear and solid one we were sure would get through," while the administration had no idea if the message sent through Lewandowski would reach the top channels. Bundy added that the United States "recognized absolute obligation never to put British in false position and hence to provide them with all information they needed for any contacts they had" including the meeting between Kosygin and Wilson that would occur in February. (Ibid.)

On January 18 Cooper, accompanied by Bruce for part of the time, saw both Brown and Wilson. In telegram 5707 from London, January 10, Cooper observed that they appeared satisfied by his explanation that Brown had carried the more precise message. Wilson proposed that the Tet bombing pause be extended to cover the entire period of Kosygin's reception in Britain, which would be "talk not sightsee." (Telegram 5707 from London, January 19; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/MARIGOLD) On January 20 President Johnson dispatched a message in response to Wilson's January 12 communication that read: "I trust that your talk with David Bruce and Cooper settled the questions you raised earlier with David and put you in a knowledgeable position to deal with Kosygin." (Memorandum from Rostow to the President, January 20; Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Marigold II) Nevertheless, Rostow opposed sharing with Wilson any information about a direct channel that might arise before Kosygin's arrival. (Memorandum from Rostow to the President, January 21; *ibid.*, Files of Walt Rostow, Vietnam, Jan–March 1967)

16. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, January 17, 1967, 11 a.m.

Mr. President:

I do believe we face a moment of truth with the arrival of this cable (attached):²

Hanoi has come back to us in Moscow with a three-part response:

—What does the U.S. mean by a "completely secure arrangement?"

—What is the U.S. position for a settlement?

—He wants a prompt reply, indicating "some sense of urgency."

I take this seriously because, as you know, I have detected some impulse in Hanoi to get out of the war but they didn't appear to know how. Specifically I felt they needed:

—secrecy and speed, to avoid surfacing the negotiation;

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Sunflower, Vol. I. Top Secret; Literally Eyes Only.

² Telegram 3066 from Moscow, January 17, was attached. In the telegram Guthrie reported on a conversation with Le Chang in which Chang requested clarification of the January 10 message (see Document 8).

—direct negotiations with the U.S. to avoid intermediaries and keep secrecy;

—an agreed end position—terms of settlement—before they surfaced the fact of negotiation to the NLF and the Chinese.

All these elements are in this response.

Therefore, I believe, we must not only find a secure technique for negotiation but we must now produce a plan for getting them out of the war step by step. We must take them by the hand.

As for secrecy, the two best alternatives are:

—Moscow;

—Rangoon, for reasons we explained.

With Tommy in Moscow, and the channel started there, we should offer to continue, but indicate a willingness to mount sustained contacts in secret in any other place or by any other means they may suggest. If they are willing to cut the Russians in, the Russians should supply a secure place in the countryside with courier service to Moscow.

But the heart of the matter is to deliver this week an outline of a settlement and a sequence for settlement, which is equally important.

Therefore, our response should be: we propose to negotiate in secret with you these things:

—principles governing a settlement;

—de-escalation steps on both sides to be taken (on an A-B basis, if you wish) when the principles are agreed and announced;

—principles we shall both urge on the South Vietnamese with whom we are connected, for a peaceful settlement within South Viet Nam, after the principles are jointly announced;

—agreement for a reinstallation of the Geneva Accords of 1954 and 1962, as the international framework for the region.

I believe there are two reasons they want speed:

—to minimize the loss of secrecy;

—to make the most of the Tet stand-down.

They may want a swift negotiation of principles; an announcement of principles; and a mutual stand-down in two weeks.

I am reacting strongly because this may be an opportunity we should not miss. When you have an insight and it opens up a little, you must back your play. But I would underline at the end that this could be fun and games. We must, therefore, in presenting our position, stick to our principles and, notably, not sell out the constitutional process in South Viet Nam. If we've gotten this far, it's because of your decisions—including your State of the Union Message—and the quality and courage of our men in the field.

Walt

17. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in the Soviet Union¹

Washington, January 17, 1967, 5:45 p.m.

120058. 1. In conversation with Harriman last night, Dobrynin said he understood that our order concerning bombing within ten nautical miles of the center of Hanoi still stood on an indefinite basis. Harriman challenged this and said that while we were continuing the order for the present, we did not consider ourselves bound to do so indefinitely. Dobrynin asked for clarification, stating that he believed Moscow understood it in this sense, based on Bundy disclosure to Zinchuk on December 27 of proposal made in Warsaw on December 24.² (This of course was prior to negative response through Polish channel on December 29.)³

2. We are informing Dobrynin quietly here that negative response of December 29 in Warsaw necessarily meant that we did not feel ourselves bound to maintain the order indefinitely. At the same time, we were continuing the order for the present and watching developments closely.

3. Your instructions on Vietnam also discuss the possibility of secret talks with DRV and indicate we have had no reply. In light of latest developments, we believe you should say that we as yet have no clear indication of DRV willingness for such talks. We simply cannot guess whether DRV has informed Soviets of our message or their latest reply, and we believe it best to protect ourselves from any charge of disclosure to any party or government. If you think it wise, you might omit discussions of this point entirely while simply reiterating our willingness for direct secret talks.

Rusk

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER. Top Secret; Immediate; Nodis; Sunflower. Drafted by Bundy, cleared by Harriman and Read, and approved by Rusk.

² See *Foreign Relations*, 1964–1968, vol. IV, Document 351.

³ See *ibid.*, Document 355.

18. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in the Soviet Union¹

Washington, January 17, 1967, 7:30 p.m.

120335. Literally Eyes Only for Ambassador and DCM. Moscow 3066.²

Following is to be held until an execute order is received:

1. Guthrie should seek appointment soonest with DRV Chargé to convey message below.

2. Message is:

a. By "completely secure arrangement" USG has in mind discussions between DRV and US representatives that would not be disclosed to any other government or party whatsoever unless by mutual agreement, and that would be subject to the strictest precautions against press or public inquiry. USG is able to assure DRV that earlier message has not been disclosed to anyone.

b. We believe DRV already has considerable information by both public and private means, of US position on settlement of Viet-Nam problem, and has also received formulations from others in contact with USG. USG for its part has studied public and private statements by DRV representatives. We believe discussions should seek to establish whether common ground now exists for an acceptable settlement.

c. In discussions, USG would be prepared to consider any topic that DRV felt should be included. For illustration, topics USG would be prepared to discuss would include following:

(1) Arrangements for the reduction or the cessation of hostilities.

(2) Essential elements of the Geneva Accords of 1954 and 1962, including withdrawal of any forces coming from outside South Viet-Nam and now present there.

(3) Arrangements for a free determination by North Viet-Nam and South Viet-Nam on the issue of reunification.

(4) Recognition of the independence and territorial integrity of North and South Viet-Nam, or of all Viet-Nam if the people should choose reunification.

(5) The international posture of South Viet-Nam, including relationships with other nations.

(6) Appropriate provisions relating to the internal political structure of South Viet-Nam, including freedom from reprisals and free political participation.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER. Top Secret; Nodis; Priority; Sunflower. Drafted by Bundy; cleared by Katzenbach, Harriman, Walt Rostow, and Read; and approved by Rusk.

² See footnote 2, Document 16.

(7) Appropriate objective means for insuring the integrity of all provisions agreed to.

d. The topics thus listed could be considered in any order, and the USG would be prepared to consider any additional topics the DRV would propose.

3. You should put these points in writing. In addition, you should note orally that while USG is prepared to conduct discussions under a completely secure arrangement at any place the DRV may wish, USG believes there are many advantages in Moscow. USG senior representatives in Moscow are fully equipped and can be supported securely and without personnel moves that might attract attention. We believe physical security in Moscow can be maintained subject to appropriate safeguards.

4. As these instructions indicate, we believe our first response should be a listing of topics. However, we recognize possibility that Guthrie might be probed further about substance of USG position. He should seek to avoid going beyond this, indicating that very purpose of discussions would be to develop positions on both sides. If, but only if, DRV Chargé should refer to Marigold ten points (which you have as attachment to Dobrynin–Rusk memcon of January 5),³ Guthrie should be familiar with these and should respond that, as we believe has been indicated to DRV, we believe this formulation would be satisfactory basis for more detailed discussion of the points contained therein.⁴

Rusk

³ See Document 7. For the 10-point statement issued during the height of the Marigold exercise, see *Foreign Relations, 1964–1968*, vol. IV, Document 331.

⁴ Guthrie and Akalovsky met with Le Chang and Hoang Man'Tu on January 20. After Le Chang read the written message, Guthrie told him that U.S. representatives would meet those of the DRV at any place, including Moscow, and that the list of topics was merely "illustrative." Guthrie noted not only that Le Chang promised to transmit the message to Hanoi, but that his demeanor was congenial, "in marked contrast with his attitude" in past meetings with Embassy representatives. (Telegram 3126 from Moscow, January 20; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER)

19. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, January 18, 1967.

About 7:45 p.m. Tuesday, January 17, 1967, the President called into his bedroom Senators Mansfield and Dirksen. They were in the living room of the Mansion at the President's invitation before the dinner given in honor of the Vice President, Speaker McCormack, and Chief Justice Warren. Others present were Mr. Marvin Watson and Mr. Walt Rostow.

Senator Mansfield sat on a chair in the far corner of the room; Senator Dirksen sat on the President's bed. The President was standing, in stocking feet, as he completed dressing for dinner.

The President said that he had asked them to join him so that they might share perhaps the most important communication he had received since becoming President. He needed their understanding and commitment. He asked whether they were willing to receive this communication on the understanding that not another soul would hear from them what he was about to say. The President then listed those who were at the lunch earlier in the day, who knew of the matter.²

The two Senators agreed to receive the communication on these terms.

The President then explained that we had been receiving a large number of hints and suggestions about negotiating an end to the war in Viet Nam. These came from many directions: Poles, Italians, Russians, Indians, etc. These had come to nothing.

We concluded that perhaps the best way of moving forward was direct communication with Hanoi. The President had considered addressing a direct letter to Ho Chi Minh. It had been decided, however, first to go directly to a representative of Hanoi in a certain capital. We had initiated this approach. We now had a reply which might be important.³ There was a certain hope.

This fragile hope could be destroyed by two things: first, by a loss of secrecy; second, by public statements or actions which were too soft or too hard. If Hanoi believed that, in fact, we would stop bombing without any compensating move on their side, they might persist with

¹Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Sunflower, Vol. I. Top Secret; Sunflower; Literally Eyes Only For the President. A typed note on the memorandum reads: "*For the Historical Record.*" In a covering memorandum, Rostow told the President: "You asked me to take notes of last night's remarkable bedroom session. Here they are—for the historical record only; and if you've got a tight enough safe!"

² The lunch with the President lasted from 1:15 to 3:10 p.m. Those present were Rusk, McNamara, Rostow, and Christian. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary)

³ See footnote 2, Document 16.

the war. They listen carefully to what is said by Senators and Congressmen. They read the newspapers and see the advertisements against our policy. Equally the chance could be destroyed if we acted too toughly, as if to put special pressure on them during a negotiation. The President cited the alleged effect of a statement by an unknown Admiral at a critical moment in a certain probe that aborted.

Therefore, the President was resisting the addition of major targets in the Hanoi–Haiphong area at this time. He had today turned recommendations that steel and cement plants be attacked.

The President then read a modified version of a memorandum sent to him earlier in the day by his National Security Staff. (WWR memorandum of January 17, 1967, 11:00 a.m.)⁴

After reading the memorandum, the President said: “I want nothing to happen to disturb this possibility between now and, say, mid-February. I would hope the public hearings on foreign policy and Viet Nam could be held in abeyance until we see what we can do. Give me two or three weeks to run this out.”

The President then asked: Will Fulbright and Hickenlooper give us this little chance? Public hearings can do us no good at all at this moment, only harm. Can the Senate hold off? The President indicated he had no problem with continuing hearings in secret.

Senator Dirksen then said: “You must call them down. They have big egos. It is not good enough if we ask them to stand down. They must hear from the President and directly know the reason.”

Senator Mansfield strongly asserted the same position.

The President probed further as to whether there was any possibility of “gaining a little running room” without having fully to take anyone beyond the Majority and Minority Leaders into his confidence in this matter.

Senators Dirksen and Mansfield stated again strongly that there was no other way than to bring them in.

It was then decided that the President would invite for a meeting in the Cabinet room at 9:30 a.m., January 18, Senators Dirksen, Mansfield, Fulbright, Hickenlooper, Russell, Smith, and Aiken.⁵

The President then read to Senators Mansfield and Dirksen a draft

⁴ Document 16.

⁵ On January 18 the President and Rostow met with Senators Mansfield, Dirksen, Hickenlooper, Russell, and Aiken for a 65-minute off-the-record session. Senator Smith did not attend the meeting. (Johnson Library, President’s Daily Diary) No record of the meeting has been found. For speculation that the President may have persuaded the Senators to delay for several weeks the Senate Foreign Relations Committee’s hearings on Vietnam in order to avoid interference with the ongoing peace initiatives, see William Gibbons, *The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War*, Part IV, p. 506.

resolution on Viet Nam. He said that he could not carry the burden of this war alone. He needed reaffirmation by the Congress.

Senator Mansfield immediately said: "This is the worst thing you could do. It is exactly what you don't want to happen—a public debate questioning the foundations of our Viet Nam policy. Your opponents would have a field day."

Senator Dirksen agreed. He said these are only words on paper. "You just pursue your course."

Senator Mansfield said any talk of a resolution reminds them of the Tonkin Gulf resolution and "rubs the wrong way on both sides."

The President then said that Secretary Rusk felt it might be useful (responding to a suggestion of Senator Fulbright) to have hearings next week on the Consular Treaty with the Soviet Union. Senator Mansfield asked if Mr. Hoover was now agreeable. The President said he could not control Mr. Hoover's view.

Senator Mansfield then asked if it would be helpful if he made a speech on the East-West trade bill and the Consular Treaty early next week. The President said this would be helpful. Mr. Rostow agreed to supply Senator Mansfield by 9:00 a.m., Wednesday, January 18, a full listing of agreements made with the Soviet Union during President Johnson's administration.

The President and the two Senators joined the party in the Oval Room at 8:15 p.m.

WR

20. Editorial Note

During October 1966 retired Mexican diplomat Luis Quintanilla traveled to North Vietnam to meet with DRV President Ho Chi Minh. At that time, Quintanilla proposed that Ho engage in private conversations with two of his American colleagues from the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, William Baggs and Harry S. Ashmore, who had arranged an international conference for world peace in Geneva in May 1967. Subsequently, Baggs and Ashmore received visas from the Democratic Republic of Vietnam Consulate in Phnom Penh and a briefing from U.S. Government officials. Accompanied by Quintanilla, they arrived in Hanoi on January 6, 1967, and remain in North Vietnam for 8 days.

On January 12 they met with Ho Chi Minh. Ho told them that private talks could begin after the United States halted its bombing of North Vietnam. He refused to entertain any reciprocal gestures before the bombing stopped for, in his view, "this would be like a person who

has been shot at and held up by a bandit in Chicago, and then was asked by the bandit what price the victim would be willing to pay for the bandit to stop shooting at him." (Report of Baggs and Ashmore to Bundy, January 18; Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Aztec; see also the published account by Baggs and Ashmore, *Mission to Hanoi: A Chronicle of Double-Dealing in High Places*) Walt Rostow saw little encouraging in Ho Chi Minh's statements to Baggs and Ashmore. "What comes through clearly, as it has with other recent visitors to Hanoi, is that they are trying to wig-wag to us that they *might* be willing to settle by negotiation," he wrote to President Lyndon Johnson in a January 23 memorandum. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Aztec)

Quintanilla insisted upon presenting his own peace plan independent of Baggs and Ashmore. On January 18 he met with Ambassador Fulton Freeman in Mexico City. He related that he had successfully submitted his own proposal for a military truce and a peace agreement to Hoang Tung, an alternate member of the Lao Dong Central Committee. The North Vietnamese had examined Quintanilla's draft and had proposed changes in it, which Quintanilla then passed on to Freeman. (Telegram 3955 from Mexico City, January 18; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/AZTEC) Bundy responded to Freeman that the draft showed that "Quintanilla may take far too optimistic view of what he has found and may have strong tendencies in direction of publicity and self-glorification." Quintanilla's proposal was "a totally one-sided paper that could not possibly form a useful basis for any further discussion." However, in order "to avoid publicity," Bundy recommended that a careful response coupled with strictures about secrecy be made to Quintanilla. (Telegram 124925 to Mexico City, January 25; *ibid.*) The administration would allow Quintanilla to respond to the North Vietnamese with a statement calling for discussions "without any prior conditions or agenda" that Hanoi could initiate through the "Quintanilla channel or any channel of which they already aware." (Telegram 4141 to Mexico City, January 26; *ibid.*, POL 7 MEX) "The element of a tangible corresponding response to the bombing halt was totally lacking," Bundy told Under Secretary Katzenbach. (Memorandum from Bundy to Katzenbach, February 3; *ibid.*, POL US–VIET N)

In a meeting with Katzenbach and Bundy on February 4, Ashmore and Baggs presumably requested a response from the administration that they could send to Ho Chi Minh. No record of this meeting can be found, but it is referenced in the negotiating volume of the *Pentagon Papers*; see George Herring, *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, page 105. As a consequence, Bundy drafted a letter for Ashmore to sign that reported that he and Baggs had informed the administration; it called for some measure of reciprocal restraint before a bombing halt would occur. (Draft

letter from Ashmore to Ho Chi Minh, February 4; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL US–VIET N) On February 15 the letter reached a DRV representative in Cambodia and was forwarded to Hanoi. On February 23 Harriman met with Baggs in Florida and told him that while the “thought their channel was the best available,” he advised no further action. Nevertheless, on February 27 Quintanilla transmitted a request to Hanoi for an “urgent” reply to the February 4 Ashmore letter. He also mentioned that Baggs and Ashmore would return to Hanoi on March 10 in order to discuss the proposal. (Memorandum to the Director of Central Intelligence from the Deputy Director for Plans and attached Intelligence Report CSDB–312/00592–67, March 2; Central Intelligence Agency, DDI Files, Job 80–B01721R, Vietnam (General) 1967) On March 3 Quintanilla received a reply from the DRV rebuffing the proposed trip due to new military actions by the United States in Vietnam. (Memorandum to the Director of Central Intelligence from the Deputy Director for Plans and attached Intelligence Report CSDB–312/00649–67, March 9; *ibid.*) Baggs and Ashmore later argued that their effort had been “undercut” by the administration due to an exchange the President had initiated simultaneously with Ho Chi Minh. See Baggs and Ashmore, *Mission to Hanoi*, pages 88–99.

At the end of May the conference *Pacem in Terris II* convened in Geneva. The Johnson administration, the Soviet Union, and the DRV did not send representatives to the conference. Given an agreement among the international participants that no Vietnamese side would be heard without both being present, the government in Saigon was not invited to attend.

During early June Baggs and Ashmore presented to both sides a call for a secret discussion to decide the agenda for negotiations. These talks would not occur prior to the termination of aerial bombardment, an idea that was strongly supported by the conference attendee nations. (*Ibid.*, pages 100–105) According to a June 14 report given to Katzenbach by Baggs and Ashmore, on June 8 Ashmore received a message from the DRV General Delegation in Paris granting permission for him to see its head, Mai Van Bo. Both Baggs and Ashmore met with Bo for an hour and a half on June 12. They told Bo that the U.S. Government knew of the meeting and “would expect to be informed.” Bo did not depart from the official position of his government in opposition to reciprocal action in exchange for a bombing halt. Baggs offered that despite its reliance on military measures, the U.S. Government was in reality looking for a means by which to settle the war through negotiations. Ashmore suggested that instead of official settlement discussions, which could not be held until the bombing ended completely, according to the DRV position, perhaps “an exploratory conversation” could occur between designated representatives of the two sides. Bo expressed interest. Bo stated categorically that his government “would talk” if the U.S. bombardment

ceased unconditionally. Bundy passed the memorandum of the conversation to S/S, with instructions to distribute it to Rusk, Katzenbach, Harriman, Rostow, McNaughton, and Helms on an Eyes Only basis. He expressed concern that the DRV leadership would misinterpret the remarks of the two Americans as implying that the “only condition” was an agreed agenda for settlement talks, with no insistence upon reciprocity. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Bundy Files: Lot 85 D 240, Top Secret WPB Chron., Jun/Aug. 1967) This channel remained moribund for the rest of the year.

On September 18 the State Department issued a description of the contacts in response to an article written by Ashmore on the episode. For text of the statement, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1967, pages 990–992.

21. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, January 19, 1967, 0630Z.

16000. 1. I visited General Thieu, who told me about progress towards a Constitution, saying that working groups representing the GVN and the Constituent Assembly were working close together at the Independence Palace with a great deal of agreement and an excellent “tone” to the proceedings.²

2. He believed that after the Constitution had been promulgated the members of the Constituent Assembly would serve individually as a sort of an electoral commission to devise the procedures for holding the election for President.

3. There would be a provision in the Constitution [omission—establishing a National Security] Council to advise the President on military matters. This, he said, would be one way in which the military would be recognized in the new government. Another way, of course, would be for military men to take off their uniforms and be candidates.

4. When I asked him about Presidential candidates, he said that

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Priority; Exdis. Received at 2:41 a.m. and passed to the White House, DOD, and CIA at 3:44 a.m.

² During the first part of 1967, the GVN wrestled with internal differences over the promulgation of a new Constitution. Not only did the ruling Directorate have points of disagreement with the newly-formed Constituent Assembly, but within the executive body itself Thieu and Ky were locked in a dispute over the procedures for Presidential candidacy. (Telegram 15193 from Saigon, January 9; Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXIV, Memos (B))

the persons whose names were heard mentioned were Suu, Dan, Don, Huong,³ Thanh and then “the two military ones,” Thieu and Ky.⁴ He felt that Huong and Thanh had the least chance.

5. I asked him whether he thought these seven names would all be printed on the ballot, pointing out that if this happened it would be not only impossible for any one man to get a majority, but it would be very difficult to get a plurality of any significant size.

6. Without giving me a direct answer to my question, he made it clear that thought is being given as to how a multiplicity of candidacies can be whittled down. One method being discussed is that no candidate’s name could go on the ballot unless a certain number of deputies in the Constituent Assembly were to sign what in effect would be a nomination paper.

7. He then said that to get anything done in Viet-Nam, it was necessary to have: A) the support of the military; B) the support of the Vietnamese people; and C) the support of the Americans. There was much talk, he said, that the Americans were supporting Suu and Dan. I said that I thought I was in a position to know, and that the Americans, meaning the United States Government, is not supporting anyone.⁵

³ Phan Khac Suu, Phan Quang Dan, Tran Van Don, Tran Van Huong, and Au Truong Thanh were prominent South Vietnamese political figures.

⁴ In a conversation with a U.S. Military Attaché, Prime Minister Ky expressed his desire to return to active military service, but since in his view no other potential Presidential candidate had a following comparable to his, Ky feared political instability if he left office. “There will be coups and counter-coups, the likes of which we have not seen before,” he predicted. (Telegram 15080 from Saigon, January 9; Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXIV, Memos (B)) In a January 10 covering memorandum submitting this information to the President, Walt Rostow commented that Ky’s major dilemma was: “should he try to be George Washington or not?” (Ibid.)

⁵ On February 1 EAP prepared an analysis of the alternative Presidential slates in the upcoming campaign in South Vietnam in response to a request by President Johnson. The analysis, drafted by Robert H. Miller of the Vietnam Working Group and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Leonard Unger, asserted that Thieu was the candidate with the most support from the military since Ky lacked Thieu’s broader base; Ky’s potential success would depend on who became his running mate. Others such as former government figureheads Phan Khac Suu and Tran Van Huong were considered either too old or too weak to be elected, and former Generals Duong Van Minh and Tran Van Don would disrupt the unity of the military. In various combinations, a potential Presidential slate could either emphasize the civilian character of the incoming government and broaden its appeal, or it could acquire a different nature and maximize military support for and cohesiveness in the new regime. Miller and Unger expressed concern as to whether the military would indeed turn over power to the civilians. The best option available to the U.S. Government was not to support any particular candidate but to ensure a fair election. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 15–1 VIET S) The South Vietnamese apparently regarded the matter differently. In a conversation with a member of the MACV staff on February 21, JGS Chairman Cao Van Vien pointed out that “absolutely no positive guidance in this matter has been forthcoming from the U.S. side,” an omission that had a “counter-productive effect” upon the leadership of the GVN just at the critical stage when American advice was needed most. (Memorandum of conversation, February 21; U.S. Army Military History Institute, William C. Westmoreland Papers, History File, 22 Jan 67–28 Mar 67)

8. I agreed with him that the promulgation of a Constitution and the election of a President were a beginning, and that it was important to have men in these high offices who could command the confidence of the people and move the country ahead.

9. On Article 21, he agreed with me that if the Constitution was a satisfactory document, as he believed it would be, this provision would be a dead letter.⁶

10. Altogether his report on Constitution-making was a report of progress.

11. As I was leaving, he brought up the matter of the revamping of the ARVN, and said that he was making a systematic tour of the country, speaking to the officers wherever he went and stressing the absolutely vital nature of this job which only the Vietnamese could do. He stressed the importance of working closely with the district and province chiefs and the importance of promoting officers on the basis of their work in pacification and not on the basis of how many Viet Cong they had killed or how many guns and Viet Cong weapons they had seized. He negated reports which I had heard of stubborn resistance to using the ARVN in this way. He did not find resistance, but found a lack of understanding. With understanding, he thought the program would really move.

Lodge

⁶ Article 21 provided for the continuation of the Constituent Assembly as the legislative arm of the government until the first National Assembly was elected. In addition, the military-dominated government of South Vietnam sought to make other changes in the draft Constitution. The most important contention involved the perceived curtailment of Presidential powers in the document. In telegram 16456 from Saigon, January 25, Bunker wrote: "I agree with the government that the President should have the normal powers with respect to emergencies and foreign affairs. We are using our influence to help bring about the necessary changes to that end. I also favor some provision to insure that the President will be elected by at least a large plurality. With a large number of candidates, some thinning out device is indispensable to prevent the winner from having a very low percentage of the total vote." National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S)

22. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, January 19, 1967, 2 p.m.

Mr. President:

Last evening I had a long and fruitful talk with Clark Clifford about your instruction that I explore the setting up of a committee to examine the effects of our bombing of North Viet Nam.

Clark posed the following questions and made the following points.

1. What use does the President propose to make of the committee's report: Is it for him? Is it for the public? Is it for the Congressional leadership?

2. Would the existence of the committee be known?

3. If the desire is to keep it secret, is this possible? He cited the success of the non-committee on foreign aid. He said secrecy was possible in that case because the subject matter was not controversial and it was not necessary to engage the various government departments very deeply. In this case, we would have to be seeking evidence and views from government departments where the issue was extremely controversial. He gravely doubted, therefore, whether we could count on keeping the existence of such a committee secret.

4. Would the committee make policy recommendations? He strongly believed that this is not a subject on which a committee should make recommendations to the President. There is no substitute, in a matter of this kind, for the President's personal, lonely judgment. And the very fact that the President was asking for outside advice in this matter would indicate, to the public and the world, that the President was uncertain. Whatever recommendations the report made would complicate the President's problems.

5. Specifically, if the committee were representative, and it came up with recommendations different from current policy, it would be very hard for the President to deal with it, as President Eisenhower found with the Killian Report, etc. On the other hand, if the committee is handpicked, it would be less than valueless, a millstone around the President's neck, which would fool no one. The effect on the public would be the same; namely, an impression of Presidential indecision on a vital controversial issue.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXIV. Secret; Literally Eyes Only. A notation indicates that the memorandum was received in the President's office at 3:03 p.m.

6. In short, it is Clark's strongly held view that this is not an issue on which a committee whose existence became publicly known, could be helpful to you.

7. Clark went on to say that if the President needs more information, a wider spectrum of views, then he should set out to get the data and the views quietly, with my (WWR) assistance.

8. If the President wished to have a fresh, clean look at the problem by men that he trusts, the prime requirement is that secrecy be maintained. If that is the way the President wishes to go, Clark recommends a very small group which would not be a committee at all. It might consist of three men—the fewer the better. I (WWR) could get them, on my own account, the materials from the bureaucracy to read them into the problem. They would not file a report. They might sit down with the President on a long evening and exchange impressions. If there were any leak, the President could then say truthfully: There was no committee. I talk to a great many people on a great many subjects.

9. If the problem is to deal with Vance Hartke's ridiculous idea,² the only advice Clark has is: ignore it. This one will go away, and Hartke will have another damn fool idea within a month which also should be ignored.

10. Clark asked me, finally, to tell you this:

—Of course he will serve in any capacity that you wish him to serve;

—But, before entering such an enterprise, he would welcome a chance to present directly to you his view.

11. Now my own reaction. On the committee I am, basically, in agreement with Clark. It would be most difficult to keep it secret. It would serve no political purpose if it were secret. It would be unsettling and possibly explosive, if made public—among other things, because it would appear you were not confident of JCS and Bob McNamara's advice. But I do think you may face a problem to which we should address ourselves and on which a certain amount of wise guidance from people like Clark, Gruenther, etc., might be helpful at the right time.

12. The problem is this: If we do not get a diplomatic breakthrough in the next three weeks or so, it probably means that they plan to sweat us out down to the election of 1968. As you know, I share your view that we would then have to think hard about how to apply our mili-

² Senator R. Vance Hartke (D-IN) proposed a halt to the bombing in both North and South Vietnam and a limitation of ground operations. See *The New York Times*, December 28, 1966.

tary power against the North with maximum effect and minimum risk of enlarging the war as a whole.

13. Because of the way in which bombing policy has evolved in the North—with pulling and hauling on each target—there has been little systematic thought about a northern strategy as a whole. Because of this, I have stimulated Cy Vance (via the Katzenbach Committee) to take a fresh look, leaving no options out, setting out the pros and cons of the three major possible strategies against the North as if we had never heard of them before. I am doing the same.

14. In broad terms, the three strategies are:

—Cut off supplies coming from outside North Viet Nam (mining, etc.);

—Bomb so as to disrupt the whole North Vietnamese economy, without interdicting external supplies;

—Apply our military power with great concentration in the southern part of North Viet Nam—at the bottom of the funnel—in effect, to separate North and South Viet Nam.

15. Under each heading there are various lines of action; and we could do all three. But this is the problem to which I think we should address ourselves and the broad strategic approach with which we should begin.

16. In addressing that problem in mid-February, if necessary, I believe you should instruct your senior advisers and their departments to clear their minds and come up with a fresh appraisal of all the courses open and the pros and cons.³

17. In making up your own mind as to what course to pursue, something like Clark's informal non-committee might be helpful to you.

Walt

³ Point 16 is circled, with the following notation written by the President: "OK—I agree. L."

23. Telephone Conversation Between President Johnson and Senator J. William Fulbright¹

Washington, January 20, 1967, 5:30 p.m.

[Here follows discussion of legislative issues relating primarily to U.S.-Latin American relations.]

President: I saw you ran out last night before Strom Thurmond² told you where the hell the cow at the cabbage. When you saw old Strom getting ready to get up, you and Joe Clark³ went to disarmament.

Fulbright: Bill Foster had asked us some time ago and I hated to back out at such a late date. I didn't care bout hearing Strom anyway.

President: He's got the answers if you'll just listen to him.

Fulbright: God almighty, he gives me the willies.

President: He says that the trouble is that the targets, that you don't know anything about these targets, that you're not hitting the right targets.

Fulbright: Well, I hope you can get those God-damned people to talking over there. I hate when I see all those figures and all those amounts and so on, you know, it's just awful.⁴

President: You are not going to get them talking until they are convinced they can't win here. And you just let them know here, the statement that you made a long time ago that they can't win here, that the hawks are more in control than anybody else and they are stronger than the President. When they are convinced of that, I am convinced that you can sit down and get an agreement with them on your '54 and '62 [Geneva Accords] and maybe have an election there with the understanding that we will just pull out and abide by the results of the election just like we did in the Dominican Republic.

Fulbright: I can be fair to you but you have to get the first step and that is I don't think you can ignore the Viet Cong. They are the bastards of the fight.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and Fulbright, January 20, 1967, 5:30 p.m., Tape F67.03, Side A, PNO 1 and 2. No classification marking. This transcript was prepared in the Office of the Historian specifically for this volume.

² Senator Strom Thurmond (R-SC). The reference is to briefings on foreign policy for members of Congress which occurred at the White House the previous day.

³ Senator Joseph Clark (D-PA).

⁴ Fulbright published an eight-point plan for peace in his book *The Arrogance of Power* (New York: Random House, 1967). The plan called for a cessation of bombing of the North and a decrease of military actions in the South leading to a four-party conference that would result in the creation of a neutralized Vietnam.

President: We are not ignoring them. When they get ready to transact business, they'll take the Viet Cong exactly like we'll take South Vietnam.

Fulbright: Why don't you encourage that damned Assembly, some of those native South Vietnamese, not Ky the general, but whoever is in there and coming into that constituency and encourage them very quietly, through your CIA or somebody, to get in communication with the Viet Cong and say, "For Christ's sake, let us have an election. We're just killing each other for nothing."

President: They are just as much under the control of North Vietnam, Bill, as that little stenographer that you sit outside who takes your direction. It is just the same way, and they got just about as much independence as a sharecropper in Mississippi.

Fulbright: This is an approach to them. Maybe they would then put it up to the North?

President: You see these people don't want anybody to know that they are missing with us and they don't want the Viet Cong or the Chinese to know it. But they see what is happening in China and they see the days are numbered with the Russians having to force everything, so they are going to talk if things just keep on. They are hollering too much not to want to talk. All this yelling—you see your friend Ashmore today with his story.⁵ They're going to talk in a reasonable length of time, in my judgment, if we don't blow it here. And if they decide they can wait until the next election, why they might do it to see if they blow up the election. Otherwise, they'll talk, and when they talk, we can make reasonable terms. We can let them bring whoever they want to. If they want the Viet Cong to come there, their voice will be heard as we have said. But they are going to write the ticket. And I think one of the most insurmountable things has been removed by Manila, which you all laughed at, but when we told them in Manila that we weren't going to stay there, that we'd come home and said it publicly all over the world, all eight of them agreed, and South Vietnam agreed that it did not want us, and we'd come out of there just like we did in the Dominican Republic. Then I think that is what's going to get it done if we do it.

I think whether we do it or not is whether they think they can wear us out here. If they think they can, they will do it because they want that territory. Otherwise, they'll be willing to settle it. And I think the Indonesia thing is just waiting to see what happens. I think that they'll be throwing Sukarno out before long and they will be willing

⁵ Ashmore publicly stated that the North Vietnamese were likely to engage in peace talks but would not do so until the United States ceased its bombing of the DRV.

to put two or three divisions of their own in there. And I think they can see that, and they can see China crumbling up. This is getting closer to a solution if we just don't blow it. The Goldwater statement today hurts us.⁶ It'll just give us hell because he has been out and he has all the dope about how they are being restrained and restricted. Strom, if it had been public last night, would have hurt us. He's just back and his was all on the targets and not using our weapons. Some of Dick's [Russell] statements, the same way. The Joint Chiefs, how we keep them and your man from Arkansas and the rest of them suppressed, I don't know.

But we are going it pretty good. If we can hold out just a little while longer, I think we will get somewhere. They will not fight anymore; they get out of the way, you see. It's awfully hard on them. What they want us to do—there are some targets we should take, the steel mill and the damn cement thing and the stuff that they are manufacturing, but we have held back because we are so close and they are so basic and there is such a change. We're not going to hit their dikes or their water or their civilians or their cities or anything like that. But everything you hit, you kill some. It is just a question of how many. But there are some things in which we could make it harder. They are having hell now. They have thousands and hundreds of thousands repairing, trying to keep going and it's not easy for them. They're not going to do this much longer if we can—I don't think they would be sending their folks back home. They're going back and forth now, you see, with these messages. We've just got to hold a stiff upper lip and be careful and don't rock the boat. When these folks go to making speeches, just get off the floor. Don't get in a debate with them. Just let Strom ignore them, you can't answer them. You can't answer them.

I just hope that Goldwater—somebody said I should have him come in and report to me because he was the nominee. I said, "The hell with the nominee. I don't want any reports like that. I want to play them down as much as I can." I read what our Navy admiral said. I don't even know who he is and I can't find the damned fellow. But he got right in to the conference table, right in the middle of it, right in Warsaw, and they just came up and said, "Well, the hell with it. Here is Johnson—the man wouldn't be speaking without him," and they interpreted what he says as representing me just like you say when Gromyko says something, that that's a Soviet line. They do not understand our system and that is the great danger and has been the danger in all of these wars we have had. That people misjudge us.

⁶ Upon returning from a 4-day trip to Vietnam on January 20, Senator Barry Goldwater (R-AZ) called for an expansion of military efforts in order to bring the enemy to the bargaining table but opposed an invasion of North Vietnam at the time.

Okay, you have given me what I wanted. I don't want to take all day, but I did want to find out about these folks, and you keep it silent. Now, listen, when I have to change out there, I am seriously thinking, I have talked to you about this once before, but you may have forgotten it. My number one problem in Vietnam as I see it is what we can clean up to try to administer it and pacify it. If Lodge gets out of there, I am inclined to put Westmoreland over in his place.

Fulbright: Well, it has become such a major military matter, I guess it is . . .

President: He's level-headed, he is quiet, he will cooperate, he will do what we tell him to do. He doesn't fight with us, he holds the folks in line, he's got the prestige, he knows the country, he can make Ky and them act, and he has the Constituent Assembly and other things, and I believe he'll be more effective than Lodge if Lodge comes out of there, and Lodge is going to come out of there after the Constituent Assembly gets out of the way, in my judgment. And you once said before, well, it is military anyway, and I wouldn't want a military man in other countries, but for the transition; just trying to get to where we can feed these refugees, where we can take care of these people, where we can protect what we have cleaned up and I believe that if we are going to have a pacification program, Bill, it is awful hard to get these AID and State Department men to manage the job. They are not managers.

Fulbright: No, that is awful bad. In fact, it is so bad it has to be all with a military operation.

President: Okay, that is all right. Do you know Westmoreland at all?

Fulbright: No.

President: I wish you did. Why don't you go to Vietnam?

Fulbright: Oh, Jesus, I'm too old to be running out there.

President: Well, you're not too old to run around and make those speeches. Arthur Goldberg is going out there next month. You could ride out there with him and be back in 10 days.

Fulbright: I promised Mike [Mansfield] I'd go to Mexico with him.

[Here follows discussion of U.S.-Mexican relations and a trip to Mexico that Fulbright was planning.]

24. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Komer) to President Johnson¹

Washington, January 23, 1967.

I. *What's Happening in South Vietnam*. Though few were as foolhardy as I in predicting it last October, more and more people now tend to agree that we are doing a lot better in Vietnam. The trend line is up on the military, political evolution, and economic fronts. The VC/NVA are hurting, and it is beginning to show. Even pacification is beginning to move, though far from enough as yet. There are signs that Hanoi is beginning to rethink the problem. The convulsion in China may prove a major bonus.

But we still aren't doing as well as we should—and can if we force the pace:

1. Evidence is gradually accumulating that the VC/NVA is *reverting more to a guerrilla-type strategy* under our successful military pressures. But is Westy shifting fast enough toward a counter-guerrilla strategy (i.e. clear and hold) to keep up with this enemy shift?

2. The *political transition* to an elected government is going well, but there are major risks of civil/military or northerner/southerner crises which could lead to critical setbacks. The stakes are so great that we can't afford to sit by passively without using our influence to insure a safe transition. Rostow and I have been pushing this for weeks now, but it won't happen unless you lay down the law.

3. *Pacification* is creeping forward, but not much more. Nor will it move faster so long as it is left mostly to the civilians with 20% of the assets, while the US/ARVN military (with 80% of the assets) still give it only a lick and promise. There is still a grievous lack of integrated, detailed civil/military pacification planning in Vietnam.

4. There is also an appalling lack of vigorous, integrated management of our Vietnam affairs in Saigon. Westy operates quite independently of Lodge and Porter. In Washington, the Katzenbach–Vance–Rostow–Komer group has been a useful forum for exchanging ideas every two weeks or so, but *not* the executive committee I hoped for (mainly because Nick is swamped with other matters).

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Walt Rostow, Meetings with the President, January–June 1967. Secret. A typed notation at the top of the source text reads: "Eyes Only Mr. Rostow," suggesting that the memorandum was sent through Rostow. On January 11 Komer had sent the President a memorandum that listed the top priorities of 1967 for South Vietnam: the promulgation of the new Constitution and the swearing-in of a new government, the use of the ARVN to increase pacification, successful local and national elections, the launching of a national reconciliation program, and measures to keep down inflation. (Ibid., Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXIII)

II. *Some Quick Fixes*. If we want to maximize the chances of accelerating results in 1967–68, we ought to consider some radical steps. These can only be taken from Washington.

1. *Management*. State can't pull together and oversee the running of this \$20–25 billion railroad. First, it's mostly McNamara's railroad. Even the civil side (say one-twentieth of the total) had to be lodged in the White House to be run at all. In any case, the State people are no managers. State's top echelons spend a lot of time usefully on the negotiating track, but not on generating the movement in Vietnam which will largely determine whether Hanoi can be brought to the table. The need is so urgent that you might even want to make Bob McNamara chairman of a Washington "executive committee". He could get us all around the table regularly and make sure things happen. I'd gladly work in harness with him.

2. Vigorous top management is even more urgently needed in Saigon. I won't say any more about Lodge, but Porter can't fairly be charged with managing a pacification enterprise that is necessarily mostly military. The 90-day trial period will shortly be up without much more happening than consolidation of the civil side under Porter (long overdue, but not enough). So I'd urge you get Taylor's and McNamara's views on what more needs to be done.

3. We badly need to decide on what kind of elected government best suits our purposes in Vietnam, or at least what we can tolerate and can't. There is plenty of evidence that the military intend to run, and even rig the election if necessary. Do we want this?²

My trip to Saigon³ can be a vehicle for carrying the word on these matters, or at the least getting a solid line on them for you. All I need is your blessing and State/DOD cooperation. Hence I suggest that at Tuesday lunch you get a reading from Rusk/McNamara on current status, and tell them what you want done.⁴

R. W. Komer⁵

² During a January 30 meeting with Komer, McNamara recommended a concentration of pacification effort few select areas to ensure greater success by bringing all resources to bear simultaneously. (Note from Komer to McNamara, January 31; Washington National Records Center, RG 330, McNamara Vietnam Files: FRC 77-0075, Vietnam (January–February 1967)) Komer had previously advised such an effort in telegram 120338 to Saigon, January 17, which he attached to the note to McNamara.

³ Komer left for a 10-day trip to South Vietnam on February 4.

⁴ Komer met with the President, McNamara, Rostow, Rusk, and George Christian at the Tuesday Luncheon the next day from 1:15 p.m. to 2:45 p.m. (Johnson Library, President's Daily Diary) No other record of the meeting has been found.

⁵ Printed from a copy that indicates Komer signed the original.

25. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, January 23, 1967, 10:45 a.m.

Mr. President:

SUBJECT

Rolling Thunder 53

Secretaries Rusk and McNamara asked me to put to you their agreed recommendations about which targets submitted by the JCS in Rolling Thunder 53 should be accepted at the present time, and which should be deferred until after Tet and until after we see what, if anything, develops in the various flowered negotiating tracks.

1. They would accept nine military support targets (marked in red in the table attached to the enclosed map:² barracks, ammo and supply depots. This table also indicates with a (d) the JCS targets which they recommend for deferral.

2. In substance, they would defer a major ammo depot near Haiphong (for fear of substantial civilian casualties); the steel plant; the cement plant; and six electric power plants.

3. They would hold the naval sea interdiction zone to the 19th parallel where it now is; the JCS kept to their original recommendation of extension to the 20th parallel.

4. The operational instruction now reads: "You are authorized to transit the Hanoi/Haiphong restricted areas as necessary in conducting air operations; however, transit of the Hanoi prohibited area by strike aircraft should be avoided." This is the 10-mile zone. Although Secretaries Rusk and McNamara did not address themselves to this point, you may wish to strengthen the language by substituting "will" for "should" to underline the importance of not having an operational accident in that zone at this time.

5. Secretaries Rusk and McNamara also recommend that, whatever the weather situation, no more than three of these new targets should be struck in any one week, to avoid the image of an accelerated, intensive, and concerted campaign.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXIV. Top Secret.

² Not printed.

My own recommendation is that you support the two Secretaries in this matter; and also change "should" to "will." I do so for two reasons:

—at this particular moment we should stay straight and level and not introduce new target systems or take operational risks which might weaken our negotiating record;

—I believe before we go into any new target systems—if that should be required after Tet—you should hear systematic argument on alternative "northern strategies" so that we decide something more fundamental than merely adding a few targets to the existing list.

Walt

Approve recommendations of Sects. Rusk and McNamara³

Alter their recommendations as follows

Alter language from "should" to "will"

See me

³ The first and third of these options is checked. A January 23 handwritten notation by Rostow at the bottom of the first page of the memorandum reads: "Townsend Hoopes notified (Sec. McNamara not available & John McNaughton out of city) of decision. Also told John Walsh of decision." Six of the nine RT 53 targets were not struck due to poor weather conditions. They were re-authorized as targets under RT 54, which was approved on February 23. (Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960–1968*, Part III, pp. 41-2–41-5)

26. Editorial Note

The escalating war in Vietnam continued to require supplemental appropriations from the Congress. President Johnson formalized his request for additional funding for the war and his Great Society programs in his Budget Message on January 24, 1967. In the message, he asked for a supplemental amount of \$12.275 billion for the remainder of fiscal year 1967 (of which \$4.5 billion needed new authorization) and \$21.9 billion for fiscal year 1968, an increase of \$5.8 billion over the previous year. As a means of underwriting these costs, he also requested that a 6 percent surcharge on incomes be levied beginning on July 1, 1967. "The tax should remain in effect for two years or for such period as may be warranted by our unusual expenditures in Vietnam," the President stated in the speech. "I will not hesitate to recommend

an earlier expiration date, however, if the fiscal requirements of our commitments in Vietnam permit such action." For the full text of the address, see *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1967*, Book I, pages 39–61.

Hearings in joint meetings of the Senate's Armed Services Committee and the Department of Defense Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee, chaired by Senator Richard Russell (D-GA), on the request for supplemental appropriations for fiscal year 1967 began the day prior to the President's speech. Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara testified on the first day of Russell's hearings. McNamara submitted a 33-page statement that discussed various military aspects of the war, including an estimate of enemy strength in the range of 275,000–280,000. For an excerpt of the statement, see *Congressional Record*, Volume 113, pages 1847–1848. In response to questioning on his prepared remarks from members of the committees, McNamara replied, "I don't believe that the bombing up to the present has significantly reduced, nor would any bombing that I could contemplate in the future would significantly reduce, the actual flow of men and matériel to the South." In his view, the bombing served solely to punish the North Vietnamese in an effort to make them cease their infiltration. In contrast, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Earle Wheeler, who also testified at the hearings, stated that the bombings did in fact reduce infiltration by limiting the overall number of people that the North Vietnamese could send southward. See *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1967*, pages 835–841; and *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, Volume 23, 1967, pages 205–206.

27. Telegram From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State¹

Rome, January 24, 1967.

3812. State 123197.²

1. Saw Fanfani last night. In reply to first question he said his interlocutor was not Vietnamese and had simply informed him that

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/MARIGOLD. Secret; Immediate; Nodis; Marigold. The telegram was received at 7:54 a.m.; there is no indication when it was sent.

² Dated January 21. (Ibid.)

Hanoi was prepared to send to him a representative if agreeable.³ He has refused any reply saying he must think the matter over. Fanfani said to me this was both because he did not wish to cause any confusion and also because the last thing he wanted to do was to get involved in a floorshow such as took place in late 1965. Yet he would of course be glad to follow up on this if Washington so desired. Contact had taken place last Friday⁴ morning prior to his meeting with Rostow and me. He had informed us of it and no one else.

2. My efforts to induce Fanfani to identify to me his interlocutor produced no results other than his vigorous assertion that this had nothing to do with La Pira or his group, none of whom including La Pira he Fanfani had seen for more than a year.⁵

3. In reply I said I did not wish to raise this question with Washington; that I thought it better, if he considered this contact potentially productive, that he should on a personal basis seek to elicit more information from his interlocutor. In this fashion both Washington and he himself would remain uncommitted (*senza impegno*).

4. Fanfani said he thought he would try that and would ask four questions: (A) the identity of the Hanoi representative; (B) his position official or otherwise; (C) his terms of reference; and (D) how he was to be recognized.

Reinhardt

³ In telegram 3664 from Rome, January 16, Lodge reported on his January 15 discussion with Fanfani on the various peace channels. (*Ibid.*) Soon thereafter, Fanfani was approached by a North Vietnamese representative interested in exploratory talks. (Telegram 3787 from Rome, January 20; *ibid.*) In telegram 3678 from Rome, January 17, Lodge reported that he had informed the Pope of the same topic during a January 16 meeting. (*Ibid.*)

⁴ January 20.

⁵ Giorgio LaPira was an Italian law professor involved in an abortive peace effort in 1965. See *Foreign Relations, 1964–1968*, vol. III, Documents 207, 263, and 271.

28. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, January 26, 1967, 10 a.m.

Mr. President:

Westy's command guidance for 1967 will interest you.²

It is clear:

- we have the initiative;
- we will have sufficient forces for steady offensive pressure on base areas, pacification, opening roads, etc.

The unsolved problems are:

- the detailed planning of pacification, province by province;
- galvanizing the ARVN for pacification;
- getting the right allocation of U.S. forces between pacification and base area attacks;
- getting the right coordination from Saigon down to the provinces between military and civil elements and between U.S. and Vietnamese efforts.

But we're moving; and Westy's vision of 1967 is basically cheering.

Walt

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXIV, Memos (B). Secret.

² Attached but not printed is telegram DOD 63890 from Westmoreland to the President, January 24, the conclusion of which reads: "In summary, we have two equally important tasks to accomplish simultaneously—maintain relentless pressure on enemy combat forces and support systems and provide expanding security to the population. Our progress will be measured in terms of Viet Cong bases eliminated, of territory cleared of enemy influence, of population secured, of land and water lines of communication which provide uninterrupted flow of goods to market, and of enemy forces destroyed. The number and nature of our tasks require a combination of deliberate planning and flexible execution. Imagination in the use of our assets, understanding of the political and economic effect of actions, appreciation of our role in support of the people of South Vietnam, and anticipation of the future leadership needs of South Vietnam will contribute to our success and to attainment of U.S. objectives. The majority of the people will gravitate toward the side which manifests greater strength. We must demonstrate throughout the country that the Government of South Vietnam is the stronger."

29. Editorial Note

On January 27, 1967, the North Vietnamese responded to the U.S. Government's January 10 message (see Document 8) when Le Chang

handed to John Guthrie, Deputy Chief of Mission in Moscow, an aide-mémoire. The document stated that the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) would only "exchange views" with the United States when the latter ended "immediately and unconditionally the bombing and all other acts of war" against North Vietnam. (Telegram 3218 from Moscow; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–68, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER) Walt Rostow suggested to the President that either this statement represented an outright rejection of the January 10 overture or it was "starting a negotiation from the very hard end." (Memorandum from Rostow to Johnson, January 27; Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Sunflower, Vol. I) Ambassador Thompson regarded the message as the "first round in oriental rug trading," although he believed that the emphasis on escalation betrayed a concern in the Hanoi leadership that the bombing was having a debilitating impact. Thompson cautioned that North Vietnam might even be compelled into "dangerous moves" such as requesting foreign "volunteers" from China. (Telegram 3231 from Moscow, January 28; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER)

The next day Hanoi clarified its requirement for engaging in negotiations to stop the fighting. In an interview with Australian journalist Wilfred Burchett on January 28, DRV Foreign Minister Nguyen Dinh Trinh stated that negotiations "could" occur if the United States ceased bombing and troop augmentation unconditionally. See *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1967*, pages 843–844. The Burchett interview marked the first time that North Vietnam addressed the issue of direct bilateral discussions with the U.S. Government. Simultaneously, the DRV sent confirmation of its modified negotiating stance through the Governments of India and Egypt. In New Delhi, the DRV Consul General emphasized the importance of the requirement of prior termination of the bombing before discussions could take place. (Telegram 128147 to New Delhi, January 30; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/NIRVANA) In turn, the Egyptians considered the North Vietnamese message that they had received, an affirmation that acceptance of the Four Points by the United States was not a precondition to talks, to be a clear indication "that Hanoi was clearly moving towards talks," which they mistakenly believed would soon occur in Cairo. (Memorandum of conversation, February 1; *ibid.*, POL 27–14 VIET/TULIP; and telegram 4293 from Cairo, February 1; *ibid.*, POL 27–14 VIET)

In response to a question concerning Trinh's statement during a February 2 press conference, the President stated: "I have seen nothing that any of them have said that indicates any seriousness on their

part. I am awaiting any offer they might care to make. They know that we are in contact with them. I cannot speak for them. But I am very anxious for them to make any proposal. And we will give it very prompt and serious consideration." For the full text, see *Public Papers of the President of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1967*, Book I, pages 128–134.

30. Letter From the President's Consultant (Taylor) to President Johnson¹

Washington, January 30, 1967.

Dear Mr. President:

I have just returned from a ten day trip to Southeast Asia for the purpose of updating my acquaintance with the area after an absence of a year and a half and of doing work related to the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board.² In the five days spent in South Viet-Nam, I talked to our principal officials and visited our major headquarters.

As a general observation, I would say that, since I left Viet-Nam, there has been dramatic progress in resolving many of the serious problems which I knew, particularly those which, in the past, arose from lack of sufficient military resources to cope with the main Viet Cong threat or derived from the chronic political instability which marked the period from the fall of Diem to the advent of the present Ky Government. In the enclosure, I have endeavored to tabulate briefly some of the most notable forms of progress which came to my attention.

Inevitably, in attacking tough problems, we either solve some incompletely or create new ones. Thus, any observer of the Viet-Nam

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Gen. Taylor (2 of 2). Secret. A handwritten "L" on the letter indicates that the President saw it. A covering note from Rostow to Secretary Rusk indicates that the Taylor report was to be a topic of discussion at the next day's luncheon of senior foreign policy advisers. Taylor returned from an 11-day trip to Vietnam on January 28. For his statement to the press regarding his visit, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1967*, pp. 844–846.

² In a January 9 note to the President, Taylor described his forthcoming official visit to Vietnam as a "refresher course in the realities of the local situation." According to a marginal notation on Taylor's note by the President's secretary, Johnson talked with Taylor at 1:19 p.m. and "heartily agreed" with the trip. The President encouraged Taylor to "take any imaginative people you want who might come up with new ideas." (Message from Taylor to the President, January 9; Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Gen. Taylor (2 of 2))

scene, impressed though he is with the visible advances made, to give a balanced report must take note of the many residual problems. This I have tried to do in the second part of the enclosure.

No report is complete without a recommendation. Mine is that your responsible officials be set to work at once to produce plans to deal with these residual problems with a view to obtaining maximum results in 1967. Rather than depend on ad hoc task forces or individual initiatives, I would suggest assigning this task to the Senior Interdepartmental Group (with the membership adjusted as required) which was set up last year by NSAM-341³ to do precisely this kind of work in directing and coordinating complex governmental activities overseas. In attacking these problems, we should try to create the atmosphere of a "victory drive" to dispel any tendency to apathy at home and to exploit the growing confidence which one senses in Viet-Nam.

Sincerely yours,

Maxwell D. Taylor

Attachment

Washington, January 30, 1967.

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD: VIET-NAM VISIT, JANUARY 20–25, 1967

The following are the important impressions which I received during my visit to Viet-Nam after an absence of a year and a half. For convenience, the record is divided into two sections, one covering indications of progress in the principal sectors of U.S. activities and the second, a short tabulation of principal problem areas which still require solution.

I. Indications of Progress

The Big War (Search and Destroy)

It is more easy to identify progress in this sector than in most of the other areas of GVN/U.S. activity. It is clear that we have gained and may expect to retain the initiative against Main Force units of the Viet Cong and the elements of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA). Important engagements have been fought and won along the border of

³ Dated March 2, 1966; scheduled for publication in *Foreign Relations*, 1964–1968, volume XXXIII.

South Viet-Nam. South of the DMZ, in the I Corps area, the Marines have decisively defeated elements of two divisions of the NVA in the course of Operation Hastings. Along the Cambodian border of the High Plateau in Operation Paul Revere and subsequent engagements, the 4th Infantry Division has beaten back elements of three NVA divisions which have intermittently attempted to force their way out of the Cambodian base area into the Highlands.

Concurrently with defensive operations along the borders, U.S. and GVN forces have been successful in actions against Viet Cong base areas which have long served as logistic sanctuaries, the most conspicuous success being the recent clearing of the Iron Triangle by the 1st Division and supporting troops. This operation began January 8 and has just ended. Among its accomplishments were the disruption of the enemy command and logistic organization, the seizure of large quantities of supplies to include the rice needed to feed five regiments for a year, and 184,000 pages of documents, many of which have significant intelligence value.

There is reason to feel that our forces can continue to be successful in bringing the enemy main forces to battle by the attack of base areas which must be defended or abandoned at great loss, by the exploitation of the improved quantity and quality of information derived from documents, prisoners and informants, and by giving better protection to the population against the foraging raids of the Viet Cong. To live and fight, the latter must have access to the people and their resources; an effective defense of the population deprives them of this vital access.

In the course of ground operations, our side has been successful in inflicting heavy losses on the VC/NVA. General Westmoreland's J-2 estimates their permanent losses in 1966 (KIA, seriously wounded, captured and defected) at about 96,000 and, projecting current trends forward, forecasts that these losses in 1967 will be of the order of 110,000. These estimates appear to be conservative because of the low ratio of killed to seriously wounded, 1 to 1.2, which J-2 uses in computations. The U.S. experience figure is about 1 to 6 for KIA to all wounded and the GVN figure is approximately 1 to 2.2. The latter would seem to be a reasonable figure to use for the VC/NVA since the ARVN do not include the lightly wounded in their WIA reports. In defense of the low ratio which he uses, J-2 points out that we are surely counting among the enemy KIA many of those seriously wounded VS who die shortly in the vicinity of the battlefield.

While the enemy casualty figures, past and projected, are encouraging from our point of view, J-2 believes that the enemy will be able to effect a net increase in his forces during 1967. To do so, he is expected to infiltrate about 7,000 men a month and recruit another 7,500

for a monthly gain of 14,500, and a total reinforcement for the year of 174,000. Thus, J-2 is counting on a net enemy gain in strength of about 64,000 for 1967.

I have the feeling, shared by many of the American officers outside of Saigon, that these J-2 figures are unduly pessimistic. It is understood that they are based largely on information contained from documents and prisoner interrogations. As a review of all such evidence is not feasible, I would be inclined to accept the J-2 estimates for planning purposes but with the feeling that there is an ample safety factor included in them.

The military progress in Viet-Nam results in large measure from the success and timeliness of the logistic efforts which have made possible the introduction and support of the growing number of U.S. forces. Our troops are magnificently equipped and supplied—if there is a fault, it is that too much equipment not needed in this theater has been brought with them.

They are also much better served now than formerly by the intelligence agencies which now have vast quantities of captured documents and large numbers of prisoners to provide the information which was so hard to acquire in previous years. The intelligence facilities available and procedures employed give the impression of a high order of professionalism. As always, there is a great deal that we do not know about such things as enemy intentions and leadership but our commanders are now far better served than ever in the past in Viet-Nam.

Revolutionary Development (RD)

In recognition by U.S. and GVN alike that RD is the weak sector of our efforts, there is a new intensification of attention and effort which leads to hope for significantly better progress in 1967. The causes for the sluggishness to date are numerous and are difficult to eradicate in the short term. The level of security remains too low in many areas to permit effective and methodical pacification. There have been planning and organizational difficulties in combining the resources of many agencies, GVN and U.S., into effective programs adjusted to the special needs of the forty-three provinces. There is the chronic shortage in the paramilitary and police forces needed to exploit the successes of the search and destroy military operations. While the 59-man RD cadres are expanding toward a year-end total of some 50,000, they are yet to prove themselves in action and there is a final target figure of 80,000 to be reached to meet estimated requirements. Even if this requirement can be met without a notable dilution of quality, there is still considerable question as to the capability of these cadres to spearhead the GVN civil activities in the fields of local government, self-help and lo-

cal security. It may be that we are expecting more from them than they will ever produce. At the same time, because of the exaggerated importance attached to them, there is the danger that, when these cadres are not available, the province authorities will use this fact as an excuse for inactivity.

The province chief is still a vastly overburdened official. While we are simplifying our organization for RD by setting up the Office of Civil Operations discussed below, Vietnamese governmental direction and resources still reach the province chief over many channels. For military help he must look to the ARVN command channel; for Revolutionary Cadre, elementary education, agriculture and public works to the Ministry of Revolutionary Development (General Thang); for police to the head of the National Police (Colonel Loan) and for other forms of ministerial support in such fields as finance, industry, public health and public welfare to a half dozen other ministers in Saigon. Until the GVN, like the U.S. Mission, consolidates responsibility for the many forms of civil aid in support of RD, it will never be possible to get really efficient administration at the vital provincial level.

These are serious obstacles which will impede progress in 1967 unless they are overcome by energetic countermeasures. Among the latter, the two most promising are the reorganized U.S. civil efforts in the Office of Civil Operations under Deputy Ambassador Porter and the new emphasis on the pacification mission of ARVN forces.

The Office of Civil Operations (OCO) appears soundly conceived and appropriately designed to achieve its purpose of integrating all U.S. resources contributing to the civil side of RD. It has just become operational and will need several months to demonstrate its capabilities. Its success will depend largely on the quality of the individuals staffing the key positions.⁴ While there is some skepticism in Saigon as to its ultimate effectiveness, it is important to give it maximum support and every opportunity to make good during the coming months. Otherwise, a more drastic organizational solution must be sought.

A similar comment may be made with regard to the RD mission of the ARVN. The decision has been taken at the senior ARVN level to make available roughly half of the infantry battalions for use at the provincial level in support of RD, and a training program is in progress to prepare these battalions for this assignment. There are doubts among some Americans with regard to the eventual success of this project. Much will depend upon the loyal acceptance of the mission by the general and field-grade officers of ARVN. There is no question about the

⁴ OCO was awaiting the arrival of 150–200 personnel. (Memorandum from Leonhart to Komer, January 24; Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXIV, Memos (A))

need for these troops on RD missions and it is essential that all U.S. influence be put behind this decision of the Vietnamese high command to assure its effective implementation.

While we are justified in being dissatisfied with current progress in RD, there has been some forward movement. Ambassador Lodge estimates that some 59 percent of the population is now securely under government control in contrast to the 54 percent which was considered secure a year ago. In appraising progress, it is a mistake to expect in the short term rapid and dramatic advances in the RD programs. By its nature, this kind of development will be slow. Much depends upon military success in achieving the necessary minimum levels of security. Progress also depends on the development of able administrators, a class which is in critical short supply in Viet-Nam, and is not easily improvised.

We should recognize that, in a sense, RD is a form of growth which will never be completed. Rather, it will blend imperceptibly into the nation-building process from which will evolve the Viet-Nam of the future. Thus, it eludes precise measurements of progress made against short term goals.

Bombing of the North

There is no doubt in the minds of U.S. representatives in South Viet-Nam as to the effectiveness and essentiality of the bombing campaign in the north. They are convinced that it impedes infiltration and imposes an ever increasing burden on the economy and government of North Viet-Nam. The big question among the U.S. military is how to intensify the air campaign and increase its contribution to an early settlement. They are convinced that there are still untouched targets which, if struck, would add materially to the effectiveness of the present program. Such targets include key elements of the North Vietnamese power system (such as the Hanoi transformer); steel, cement and chemical plants supporting the war effort; untouched components of the transportation system (locks on the inland waterways and railroad yards); and, in high priority, the port of Haiphong. Our commanders believe that if allowed to attack a target system restricted only to avoid significant civilian casualties, they could achieve greater results than now in a shorter time and with fewer airplane losses.

Political Progress

In this sector, progress as represented by the work of the Constitutional Assembly and the movement toward constitutional government and presidential elections, has been most encouraging. While there are still unresolved problems in drafting the constitution, U.S. observers expect its promulgation on schedule in March. Thereafter, they look to presidential elections a few months later, probably about Sep-

tember, and hope for as successful an election as that of September, 1966, when the delegates to the Constitutional Assembly were elected by a vote of 80 percent of the eligible voters.

While not ruling out the possibility of a civilian President, American official opinion in Saigon tends to regard Generals Ky and Thieu as the most likely candidates. There is a difference of opinion as to which one would make the stronger candidate. Thieu is regarded as the more desirable in terms of experience and stability but he is not generally popular and suffers politically from being a Catholic and an alleged Dai Viet. Our U.S. representatives agree that it would be most unfortunate to have a campaign in which both generals run in competition but are inclined to believe that the military themselves will see to it that this does not occur.

A point of complete agreement is that the USG should keep its hands off the presidential election and allow an uninhibited expression of Vietnamese choice.⁵

Economic Progress

On this complex subject, it is sufficient to say that, following devaluation, prices have tended to level off and that the pressures of inflation, while remaining strong, appear to be under control for the moment. The government gold reserves are about \$300 million, and we are trying to get GVN agreement to reduce this reserve to \$250 million. The Saigon Port remains a problem but with the completion of Cam Ranh Bay and the improvement of auxiliary ports, we have been able to meet military requirements and to carry out an assistance program totalling \$455 million in 1966. The anti-inflation line has been held but the battle is still on and a final victory has not been won.

Progress Toward a Settlement

There is a general feeling among our senior officials in South Vietnam that progress toward a settlement is good in the sense that we have scored successes, political and military, which create a situation

⁵ In a January 12 memorandum, Komer warned against a "hands off" attitude and called for a program of action to limit "the risks of setback." Although the United States should avoid any overt "interference," he suggested that the Embassy warn the ARVN leadership not to attempt any coups, encourage a broad coalition, and discourage politicians from antagonizing the military. Direct political action was also an option to be explored. (Ibid.) In a January 27 memorandum to the President, Komer continued to call for a strong decision at the highest level for political action in Vietnam. "At the moment the drift is favorable, but there are plenty of storm signals. In the Santo Domingo case, as I understand it, we decided we couldn't afford to 'lose' the election, and saw that we didn't. Unless we make the same kind of decision *now*, and follow it up closely, we're running great risks." (Ibid., Files of Robert Komer, Memos to the President, Jan–May, 1967)

conducive to successful negotiations. However, there is general uneasiness over our negotiating positions (or lack thereof) with regard to many of the important matters which must be dealt with in a settlement. In Embassy Telegram 7630, October 3, 1966,⁶ the Embassy was authorized to undertake a commitment to the GVN which contains the following language:

“... the U.S. will not withdraw our troops before security is assured or GVN is able to cope with terrorism or while the Viet Cong infrastructure remains intact; South Viet-Nam will not be left without protection.”

Since that time, there have been statements like the Manila Communiqué⁷ and passages in public addresses of senior officials which appear to Saigon to be incompatible with this commitment.

Other causes for concern include an apparent lack of comprehension in Washington of the problems of arranging a cease-fire on acceptable terms and a fear that we will cease our bombing of the north either as a price for the initiation of negotiations or in exchange for unverifiable assurances of some sort from Hanoi. There is no agreement as to how we would behave if the enemy should avail themselves of the so called “fade away” option. The feeling is that we should move rapidly to develop positions on these points before we are surprised by Hanoi initiatives.

II. Problems

Our principal remaining problems in South Viet-Nam are those arising from the inadequacy of progress made to date in the sectors discussed above. On the Big War front, a primary question is how best to use U.S. ground forces during the coming year. MACV has indicated in the 1967 Campaign Plan the intention to continue the primary effort of U.S. forces against the Main Forces of the VC/NVA and to intensify that effort by continuous aggressive actions against enemy units and bases with priority given to areas which contain 77 percent of the population of South Viet-Nam. At the same time, the plan recognizes the necessity for supporting RD without specifying the level of U.S. effort. This is a mission which, if uncontrolled, could generate requirements for large increases in U.S. forces and, hence, needs to be carefully monitored.

For the moment, four U.S. infantry battalions are earmarked to support RD in the old battleground of Long An Province southeast of

⁶ See *Foreign Relations*, 1964–1968, vol. IV, Document 258.

⁷ The October 25 Manila communiqué, issued by the Seven-Nation Conference, established as a fundamental part of a future peace settlement the mutual withdrawal from Vietnam of all belligerents. For text, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1966, pp. 867–871.

Saigon. This will be as a test of the effectiveness of U.S. forces operating against small guerrilla bands deeply imbedded in a heavy rural population. Until firm conclusions can be drawn from this experience, I would hope that we would not commit any more of our forces in this kind of static mission.⁸

To avoid further demands for U.S. troops on this kind of duty, we have the problem of getting an adequate return from the ARVN units committed to the new pacification mission. RD is essentially a Vietnamese job and we will make a great mistake if we try to take it over.

Our best contribution to RD can be made through an efficient execution of the mission of the OCO. By example, we must induce the GVN to tidy up its organization for RD, something fairly easy to do if General Thang's Ministry for Revolutionary Development were given broader powers. But if we can never entirely perfect the GVN performance in this field, there is no excuse for ineffectiveness of the U.S. effort. Henceforth we have two large U.S. organizations working side by side, MACV representing our military resources and OCO representing the non-military. Together, they must work out and implement interlocking plans which will keep the civil effort geared in place and time to the progress of the military campaign. Too often in the past, the latter has run away from the former so that military success has resulted in no permanent gain in RD. It would seem reasonable to give OCO about six months to prove itself and then review the situation.

Although I have mentioned the favorable progress toward constitutional government, success in this field is so critical that all remaining problems related to it should be watched closely to assure timely resolution. But too much zeal on the U.S. side can be harmful. To have maximum lasting effect, this must be a genuine Vietnamese success without direct U.S. influence or involvement in shaping the outcome.

In preparing for a settlement of this conflict, we have the problem of eliminating the uncertainties and of firming positions on the points mentioned in the discussion above. Specifically, we need answers to such key questions as the following:⁹

a. What price should we exact for the cessation of bombing in the north?

⁸ The troops were temporarily deployed to support an experiment in unified pacification management with the ARVN.

⁹ A February 6 memorandum to the Joint Chiefs of Staff from Sharp contained his answers to these questions. (National Defense University, Maxwell Taylor Papers, Amb. Unger Correspondence) Westmoreland sent his responses to Sharp in telegram 89063, February 7. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXV, Cables) For the responses of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to these questions, see Document 90.

b. What forms of verification are essential to protect ourselves against unfulfilled Communist promises or the traps of a phony de-escalation?

c. What role in negotiations will we concede to the GVN and to our allies who are contributing military forces?

d. How will we avoid a stalemate in negotiations on the pattern of Panmunjom?

e. How can we prepare U.S. and international public opinion for the tough positions which the U.S. must take in any settlement which will achieve our basic objective of an independent Viet-Nam free from aggression?

There is an overall problem which is the critical one—how to make 1967 the year of victory in Viet-Nam. There is a fair chance to do so but it will require a maximum, simultaneous effort across the whole range of U.S./GVN activities. We must do better in our ground operations in the south, raise the level of the air operations in the north, inaugurate a constitutional president, hold the line against inflation and show significant progress in RD in the principal areas of population. If we can do these things in Viet-Nam while conducting ourselves at home in such a way as to show that, regardless of pressures, the U.S. will not change its course, I have the feeling that the Vietnamese situation may change drastically for the better by the end of 1967.

Maxwell D. Taylor¹⁰

¹⁰ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

31. Memorandum From the President's Special Consultant (Roche) to President Johnson¹

Washington, January 30, 1967.

Some time ago (in a memo dated November 4, 1966).² I suggested that our plans in Vietnam should be predicated on a split between Thieu and Ky.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXIV. Secret. A copy was sent to Rostow.

² *Foreign Relations*, 1964–1968, vol. IV, Document 291.

—The Mission took a dim view of this prediction, arguing that Ky and Thieu were buddies for life.

But now the cables and intelligence reports indicate that a Ky–Thieu split is in full bloom with each of them building political capital for the presidential election.

This is splendid—so long as they both stick to *political* capital development.

However, the temptation to reach for guns is going to be very great.

—Only one of them can be elected President and clearly if a military man is President the Prime Minister must be a civilian.

—So, come election night, one or the other will be unemployed.

In power terms, Ky has General Loan and the National Police, who just did a spectacular job in disposing of General Co.³

Thieu, to a lesser degree, has ARVN, but the odds are that he could beat Ky in an open election, which would give him the mantle of legitimacy.

Whatever the outcome, we have enormous stakes in the peaceful, political evolution of South Vietnam.

I strongly recommend that we take out coup insurance, that is, announce privately to the Vietnamese through the Ambassador and General Westmoreland, that we will not permit a coup to take place.

And set up contingency plans in Saigon so that our power can effectively be utilized to block any coups. This is the only thing the Vietnamese will taken seriously.

John P. Roche⁴

³ Nguyen Huu Co was ousted the previous week from his Ministerial offices.

⁴ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

32. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in the Soviet Union¹

Washington, January 31, 1967, 5:16 p.m.

128486. Ref: Moscow's 3218 and 3231.²

1. Guthrie should ask to see DRV Chargé soonest to deliver following written message:

a. The USG has carefully noted the DRV message of January 27 and the accompanying remarks by the DRV Chargé. The USG has preserved the strictly confidential nature of these exchanges, but notes that the DRV has broadcast publicly the essence of the January 27 message and asked other governments to inform us that the DRV is prepared to enter negotiations with the USG when bombing of North Viet-Nam stops without stated conditions. The US has felt that it must give some response to third nations conveying messages from the DRV, and will be conveying such responses in the near future. We believe this essential in order to protect the existence of this strictly confidential channel. We assume the DRV will treat third country channels in the same manner, but that strictly confidential statements will continue to be handled through this channel.

b. The basic objective of the USG remains the holding of direct and private talks covering any elements that either side believes should be considered in reaching a peaceful solution to the Viet-Nam problem. For this purpose, the US would be prepared to include in these discussions the four-point position of the DRV or any other matter the DRV wishes to bring up. The US would welcome DRV comments on the US message of January 10.³

c. At the same time, the USG notes the concern of the DRV in discussing "intensification" or "escalation" of the bombing of North Viet-Nam as presented in the January 27 aide-mémoire and the oral remarks of the DRV Chargé. We are ready to discuss this and related issues. But we remind the DRV that one step has already been taken by the USG to de-escalate the war in the North: for more than a month our planes have been ordered not to bomb within 10 nautical miles of Hanoi city center. We would like to avail ourselves of this direct private channel to inform the DRV that the USG would be prepared to implement additional measures to de-escalate the bombing of the North to create

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 27-14 VIET/SUNFLOWER. Top Secret; Immediate; Nodis; Sunflower. Drafted by Bundy, cleared by Rostow and Read, and approved by Rusk.

² See Document 29.

³ See Document 8.

conditions conducive to the success of talks with the DRV. We, of course, would be impressed with similar acts of restraint on the part of the DRV, and we can assure the DRV that any such acts on its part need not be made public. The favorable atmosphere which would result from these mutual steps toward peace would permit the US and DRV to take additional steps toward obtaining a peaceful solution.

d. The USG is aware that the DRV is sensitive to any public link between a stopping of the bombing and reciprocal actions on Hanoi's part. In this connection, it should be observed that the cessation of bombing would lead to a world-wide assumption that talks were under way and it would become increasingly difficult to hold discussions under conditions of secrecy. For this reason, we remind the DRV of the USG suggestion that the stopping of the bombing might take place as a prior and ostensibly unilateral action. Before doing this we would want a private understanding with the DRV that additional subsequent steps would be taken that would amount in the aggregate to an equitable and reciprocal reduction of hostile action. The USG takes this opportunity to renew this suggestion as one to which the DRV may wish to give serious consideration.

e. Finally, the USG notes that the approaching Tet period, during which both sides have announced cessations of military action, including the bombing of North Viet-Nam, may make the present occasion particularly appropriate for discussions along the lines suggested above. In view of the nearness of the Tet period, the USG hopes that the DRV response to the foregoing will be made as soon as possible.

2. Before handing over the above written message and reading it for translation, Guthrie should note orally that the USG refutes categorically the charges about US actions and intentions concerning South Viet-Nam and the GVN contained in the DRV aide-mémoire and oral remarks. However, in the interests of bringing about a constructive exchange of views, the USG will refrain from a point-by-point refutation and proceed to our formal reply to the January 27 aide-mémoire.

3. Either at close, or at appropriate point in conversation, Guthrie should ask when DRV Chargé expects new ambassador to arrive. FYI: Purpose of this inquiry is to suggest possible early appointment of representative qualified for more frank and direct discussions, if DRV desires. End FYI.

Rusk

33. Telegram From the Embassy in the Soviet Union to the Department of State¹

Moscow, February 2, 1967, 1515Z.

3321. Ref: A. State 128486;² B. Moscow 3295, para 1 P.³

1. Hoang Man'Tu failed call back yesterday afternoon (ref B) but phoned at 12:30 today to say Le Chang would see DCM at 14:00 today.

2. DCM, accompanied by Akalovsky, met with Le Chang for 50 minutes. Latter accompanied by Hoang Man'Tu and also by one Nhuyen Dinh Dhuong, who acted as English interpreter.

3. DCM began by making oral statement per para 2 ref State tel. Then handed Le Chang written statement.

4. After Huong translated text into Vietnamese (he did it twice, apparently to ensure accuracy), Le Chang inquired if DCM had any additional remarks to make.

5. Noting he had made such remarks at outset of meeting, DCM asked if Le Chang had any questions re message just delivered to him.

6. In consultation with Tu and Dhuong—apparently re exact language USG message—Le Chang raised following points.

A. Le Chang wishes to know what was meant in sentence noting that "DRV has broadcast publicly essence of January 27 message and asked other governments to inform us that DRV is prepared enter negotiations with USG when bombing of NVN stops without stated conditions." Specifically, he wished to know what message being referred to and also to get more concrete information re latter part of sentence. DCM said message was one Le Chang had given him January 27; as to info re second half of sentence, said would relay question to USG. Le Chang said he could assure DCM January 27 message had not been publicized; DCM noted reference was only to "essence" of message and not to message as such. In response Le Chang's query whether ref-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 27-14 VIET/SUNFLOWER. Top Secret; Nodis; Sunflower. Received at 11:24 a.m.

² Document 32.

³ Telegram 3295 from Moscow, February 1, contained a chronology of the Embassy staff's meetings with their North Vietnamese counterparts; paragraph "P" described Akalovsky's call on Hoang Man'Tu to request an appointment for Guthrie with Le Chang. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Sunflower)

erence was to DRV FonMin Trinh's interview with Burchett, DCM said this might be one of such instances but reiterated would transmit question to Washington. Le Chang said would welcome info on this point but also wished repeat January 27 message not published at all.⁴

B. Le Chang then asked for clarification second and third sentences penultimate para USG message. ("In this connection, it should be observed that cessation of bombing would lead to a world-wide assumption that talks were under way and it would become increasingly difficult hold discussions under conditions of secrecy. For this reason, we remind the DRV of the USG suggestions that the stopping of the bombing might take place as a prior and ostensibly unilateral action.") DCM limited his response to noting that these statements would probably be clear to government in Hanoi. Added that should this not be the case, he would appreciate being informed by Le Chang. In reply to Le Chang's question if first cited sentence means U.S. would continue bombing DRV while talks going on, DCM observed answer contained in next two sentences, which he read to Le Chang.

C. Le Chang asked if reference to "additional subsequent steps" etc., meant that cessation of bombings would be conditional. DCM replied he could only repeat what message said and quoted again third and fourth sentences penultimate para, stressing words "equitable and reciprocal."

7. Le Chang then said would convey message to his govt and would inform us if he received any instructions. As to rejection by U.S. Govt of DRV Govt's statements and statements he had made orally to DCM as representative U.S. Govt in USSR, asserted they in accord with facts. Contended practical deeds by U.S. Govt have shown U.S. constantly intensifying and extending aggressive war in both SVN and NVN. Proof of this were recent U.S. military operations, such as bombing and clean-up operations in SVN, as well as recent bombings of populated areas in sovereign state of DRV. Re latter, cited January 29 bombing of a village in Thanh Hoa Province, asserting it resulted in over 100 elderly civilians being killed or wounded. Le Chang alleged these actions demonstrated U.S. Govt has yet to prove its good will and said all peace and justice-loving people of world, including American people, condemn bombings of civilian population. Observing he made

⁴ The Department believed that this issue had to be addressed. In telegram 131591 to Moscow, February 3, Guthrie was instructed to emphasize that the Trinh interview and a January 29 article in the DRV's official newspaper conveyed the "essence" of the January 27 message, even though Hanoi had not publicized the message it sent to the U.S. Government. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 27-14 VIET/SUNFLOWER)

these remarks in connection USG rejection his govt's message, reiterated would convey U.S. message to Hanoi. (*Comment*: From context, it clear that Le Chang referred here to DCM's opening oral remarks and not January 27 message as a whole.)

8. DCM said would report Le Chang's supplementary remarks as well.

9. Before parting, DCM inquired when new DRV Ambassador expected to arrive. Le Chang said "in near future."

10. During phone call this noon, Tu asked who would be coming, DCM or Ambassador. Made no further comment when told "DCM" and subject did not arise during meeting.

Thompson

34. Memorandum From the Ambassador at Large (Harriman) to President Johnson and Secretary of State Rusk¹

Washington, February 2, 1967.

SUBJECT

"Negotiations Committee"

At the Negotiations Committee meeting this afternoon, I raised the question of the extension of the bombing pause beyond the four-day Tet period.

As this subject is so serious a matter of policy, I did not ask for an expression of opinion on whether the pause should be extended, but rather on how it might be dealt with, if the President should decide to take this action.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Sunflower, Vol. II. Top Secret; Nodis; Sunflower. In the February 3 covering note transmitting the memorandum to the President, Rostow wrote: "Herewith Averell Harriman suggests an extended unilateral bombing pause during Tet; and reports further arrangements to debrief Baggs." The handwritten "L" on the covering note indicates that the President saw Harriman's memorandum. Harriman's assistant, Chester Cooper, also took notes of the Negotiations Committee meeting. (Memorandum of meeting, February 2; Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Harriman Papers, Chronological File, Feb. 1967 General)

The following procedures were suggested:

(1) Hanoi should be informed through Moscow channel prior to the beginning of the Tet period that bombing would not be resumed after Tet. No indication should be given of the duration of the pause. Hanoi should also be informed that we would watch with interest what Hanoi did during the Tet period and beyond in the movement of supplies to the South by road and sea, and other indications of positive reaction in de-escalation, as well as take into account their reply to our messages of January 20 and 31.² Hanoi should be given this advance notice of the pause since otherwise the North Vietnamese may not recognize its significance and use it automatically for their military advantage.

(2) We should request Brown to inform Kosygin in London of the above, and ask him to point out on his own initiative the opportunity the Soviets have to use their influence in Hanoi for a favorable response in reciprocal de-escalation and in willingness to begin immediate discussions.³

I strongly recommend that the pause be extended for the full seven-day Tet period and beyond for a sufficient length of time to permit a reaction from Hanoi.

My reasons for urging this action now are:

(1) The Tet period will be the last chance the President will have for another year to extend a pause which has been begun during a season of good will. This pause may encourage Hanoi to start serious negotiation.

(2) With the recent diplomatic and propaganda build-up, the world is looking for some response from the US. This pressure will increase. By extending the pause, the President will place himself in a strong position abroad as well as at home to show again that he is in the lead in seeking a peaceful settlement. If Hanoi abuses the pause, it will strengthen the President's hand in the prosecution of the war. If it becomes desirable to resume bombing, the DRV/VC will undoubtedly provide credible public justification by some terrorist or military action.

Averell

² See Documents 18, 29, and 32.

³ On February 2 Rusk discussed with Cooper the points that he should go over with Wilson and Brown. (Notes of meeting, February 2; Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Harriman Papers, Special Files, Public Service, Subject Files, Vietnam, General, Jan.–March 1967) In addition, on February 3 Ambassador Dobrynin informed Kohler that he had been told of the Moscow contacts with the DRV. (Telegram 131591 to Moscow, February 4; Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Sunflower, Vol. I)

35. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, February 4, 1967, 12:40 p.m.

Mr. President:

Herewith Amb. Goldberg suggests that:

—for the time being we not undertake “new or additional” targeting in North Viet Nam;

—following the Tet ceasefire we further reduce bombing in the North; inform Hanoi; and express our expectation that North Viet Nam undertake “some corresponding de-escalatory action.”

Comment: Although I remain sceptical that mutual de-escalation is the likely route to peace, we ought to develop better thought on:

—what action by them would be escalatory;

—and, especially, how we should monitor and measure it.

W. W. Rostow²

Attachment

USUN 3848—NODIS—Sunflower, February 2, 1967³

For the President and Secretary of State from Goldberg

In connection with Hanoi's recent approaches, both direct and indirect,⁴ I have already indicated my agreement with the appraisal in the last telegram to Moscow in Sunflower series that approaches could represent either:

A. A sign of serious interest on Hanoi's part in beginning process toward reaching settlement or toward mutual abatement of the conflict; or

B. Part of an intensified propaganda effort to increase pressure of world and domestic opinion on U.S. to end bombing.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Sunflower, Vol. I. Top Secret; Nodis.

² Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

³ The text is a typed copy of the telegram.

⁴ INR concluded in an Intelligence Note, February 3, that Hanoi had split the various demands of its negotiating position into several parts in order to create a more attractive environment for talks. Bilateral discussions were now specifically contingent upon a bombing halt, a political settlement revolved around U.S. recognition of the NLF, and the Four Points no longer had to be accepted before negotiations began. As a result, the DRV had “made its position more flexible” in order to “make the US less reluctant to yield” to its immediate demands. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, EA/ACA Files: Lot 69 D 277, Vietnam File—DRV)

I consider it essential that, in reacting to these approaches, we follow course which does not exclude either of these possibilities and which takes into account slightly greater weight given in assessment to the first possibility. Our reaction, in short, must serve dual purpose: It must demonstrate convincingly to Hanoi that we are prepared to accept Hanoi's direct approach as serious move and to respond affirmatively; at same time, our reaction must be such that it will protect our public position in event Hanoi's direct approach turns out to be propaganda effort.

With these purposes in mind, I wish to urge two additional steps to policy which has been approved for responding to Hanoi's direct approach:

First, while this approach is being explored, and until it is ascertained beyond reasonable doubt that it is not serious move on Hanoi's part, we should undertake no new or additional targeting for our bombing sorties in North Vietnam.

Second, following the Tet ceasefire, we should reduce the bombing of North Vietnam by a small but significant amount, namely: suspend those bombing sorties which are directed against targets not related to the North's infiltration of men and supplies into South. As I understand from Secretary McNamara's statement to Cabinet on February 1, this would involve suspension of approximately 5% of present sorties in North.

This second step would be taken without any announcement and with every possible effort made to ensure its complete secrecy. We should notify Hanoi directly of this action. Perhaps at outset of the Tet ceasefire, stating that: It represents a substantial earnest of our desire to de-escalate conflict; we would expect North Vietnam, within reasonably prompt period, to inform U.S. of and actually carry out some corresponding de-escalatory action on its part; and, finally, we are prepared to include further steps toward mutual de-escalation as one of subjects to be explored in private talks.

The principal advantages I see to these additional steps on our part are as follows: They offer something of substance to Hanoi immediately and the prospect of something more in future; there is, moreover, reasonable prospect of keeping secret our action, as well as any action Hanoi might choose to take in response. These in themselves could be significant factor in persuading Hanoi to continue direct contact with us. At same time, I believe the steps I have proposed would serve to protect our public position: on the other hand, we would be relatively free from charge that we had not responded affirmatively to Hanoi's approaches. Our public record on this score will need bolstering, for it appears the record is being rather badly clouded by Polish version of how our mid-December bombings interfered with what they

conceive to be a very promising chance of talks with Hanoi. On other hand, since reduction of bombing would be relatively small and would not involve suspension of sorties directed against targets related to North Vietnamese infiltration, our action would not open us to charge of having placed in jeopardy status and security of our forces in South.

36. Telegram From the Embassy in the Soviet Union to the Department of State¹

Moscow, February 6, 1967, 1500Z.

3375. Ref: State 131591.²

1. Akalovsky phoned Hoang Man'Tu 11:42 hours February 4 to arrange meeting today. Latter was out of office and failed call back as requested by Akalovsky. When Akalovsky called again at 10:20 today, Tu said he had not received message Saturday.³ He called back at 10:50, saying Le Chang very busy today and could receive DCM at 13:00 tomorrow. Noted, however, that if, as Akalovsky had indicated, we really wanted meeting ASAP, he would check with Le Chang again. Having been told we would prefer meeting today, Tu said would call within hour if such meeting possible. He did so five minutes later, suggesting meeting at 13:00 today provided it would not last beyond 14:00, when Le Chang had another commitment. We agreed.

2. Meeting was attended by same participants as last time and lasted 35 minutes. DCM opened by recalling at February 2 meeting Le Chang asked certain questions re U.S. paper he received on that date, some of which DCM had answered himself and some he said would refer to Washington. Noting Le Chang had asked about specific meaning of sentence re public broadcast by DRV of essence its January 27 message, and particularly if reference was to Trinh–Burchett interview,

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER. Top Secret; Nodis; Sunflower. Received at 11:09 a.m.

² In telegram 131591 to Moscow, February 3, the Department asked that Guthrie inform Chang that the U.S. Government's reference to the DRV's public broadcast of the January 27 message referred to the essence of the message being released in the statement made by Trinh and comments contained in the *Nhan Dan* article. In addition, Chang should be informed that the Governments of both Egypt and India had passed messages from DRV representatives stating the same cessation formula. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Sunflower)

³ February 4.

DCM said he had been instructed deliver answer to that question in writing and gave Le Chang paper per para 2 reftel.

3. After translation of paper, on which Le Chang made no comment, DCM said that in connection U.S. February 2 message⁴ he also wished refer again to final paragraph that message, which he quoted. Added that U.S. would be most interested in Hanoi's reaction to our various messages on urgent basis.

4. Le Chang inquired if para DCM just quoted was identical to that contained in Feb 2 message or modified version thereof. When DCM said he had quoted para verbatim from message but had also made an additional statement, Le Chang requested that latter be repeated.

5. Pointing out that he turning to somewhat different subject, DCM then referred to Estabrook Feb 5 *WashPost* story of which he gave Le Chang brief oral summary based on State 131700.⁵ Said he mentioned story because he instructed tell Le Chang that story had come from Polish sources and that U.S. Govt will maintain complete silence and avoid comment on it.

6. As Le Chang indicated he had no comment to make at this point, DCM said he wished raise a matter of operational nature. Noting that both sides had been concerned to maintain their contact confidential and secret (Le Chang expressed full agreement with this), DCM said we concerned about certain aspects of this: (A) Soviets would know about his visits to DRV Embassy, e.g., his driver Soviet; and (B) it always possible Western correspondents might see him enter or leave DRV Embassy and ask him what he doing here. If (B) should occur, he could not deny his visit, and problem would be how to respond to questions. One possibility would be to confirm that contact had been established and refuse further comment. If we kept quiet, there might be implication that we discussing POWs. DCM said all this led him to ask if we should arrange another meeting place. Should we ask Soviets to provide us a less conspicuous place? While stressing we had no fixed ideas about this matter, reiterated our concern and invited Le Chang's comment.

7. Le Chang said it his side's view, as well as previous mutual agreement, that all these exchanges should be confidential and secret. This connection, he wished reiterate DRV position not to make public

⁴ See Document 33.

⁵ *Washington Post* columnist Robert Estabrook's story of February 3 discussed the contacts in Warsaw that would have led to direct negotiations between the DRV and the United States if not for ill-timed U.S. bombing raids. It was reported in circular telegram 131700, February 4. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S)

these exchanges, either through Western correspondents or any other people. Re place of meeting, Le Chang emphatically stated his view was that we should not ask any third party to arrange for a change of venue, because of principle of confidentiality and secrecy he had mentioned. Also said he wanted reiterate that time or content of meetings should not be mentioned to anybody, including correspondents. As to how any possible press query should be answered, said he was sure that if this principle were abided by, many ways of responding could be found. In response DCM's comment correspondents would indulge in guessing, Le Chang said if they wanted to guess they could do so. Reverting to question of locus, Le Chang thought that if venue were changed many additional people would know about our contact; he thus did not believe such change would be in "our" interest, if only from standpoint of avoiding distortions by correspondents, especially Western.

8. DCM asked if Le Chang was suggesting that in case any possible press inquiry DCM should make a no comment response. However, Le Chang refused to be pinned down, saying merely it up to DCM—who surely experienced this regard—how to respond while preserving principle of secrecy. DCM reiterated that while we had no fixed ideas we concerned about problem, and expressed appreciation for Le Chang's comments.

9. Le Chang closed meeting by saying he would report today's exchange to his govt but that "for time being" he had no further comment.

10. On way out, Akalovsky raised with Tu question of ensuring more effective communication, with particular reference to Tu's failure receive his message February 4. Specifically, Akalovsky asked if in Tu's absence he should identify himself to anyone else receive his call or leave messages for Tu. In what seems indicate NVN's concern about leaks, including by their own personnel, Tu immediately responded Akalovsky should not identify himself; rather, he should speak Russian and leave message for Tu to call a fictitious Russian, using a mutually agreed code name for that purpose. He suggested, and we agreed, use "Ivanov" in such contingencies.⁶

Thompson

⁶ In telegram 131734 to Moscow, February 5, Rusk requested that Guthrie also convey orally that since it was nearly Tet, the matter required the utmost urgent response from the North Vietnamese. (Ibid., POL 27-14 VIET/SUNFLOWER)

37. Letter From the President's Consultant (Taylor) to President Johnson¹

Arlington, Virginia, February 6, 1967.

Dear Mr. President:

At your Tuesday luncheon last week,² you invited me to consider alternative ways to make General Westmoreland Ambassador to Viet-Nam in succession to Cabot Lodge. I have done so and the following are my conclusions.

The advantages of selecting Westmoreland arise from his personal attributes of leadership; his deep experience in the intricate problems of Viet-Nam, both civil and military; his immediate availability; and the opportunity which his appointment offers to put all U.S. resources under the effective direction of a single official. Likewise, there would be the advantage of improved leverage on the Vietnamese military which Westmoreland with his military prestige and added authority as Ambassador could exert in influencing the trend of the important political events which lie ahead.

On the negative side of the balance sheet, I can see at least two possible items—the opportunity afforded the critics to charge that the military have taken over to the detriment of our non-military objectives and the difficulty which Westmoreland may have in keeping out of the direct conduct of the war and shifting his interests and talents to the broader field of the direction of all U.S. activities. But in the absence of a very outstanding civilian candidate for Ambassador, I feel that in the selection of Westmoreland, the pros outweigh the cons by a substantial margin.

If this conclusion is accepted, it then becomes a question of how to readjust the top echelons of the U.S. organization in Viet-Nam to such a decision. I feel that in making changes, the following points should be taken into account:

a. To unify responsibility for the total U.S. effort, Westmoreland should be concurrently Ambassador and Commander-in-Chief of all U.S. military forces in South Viet-Nam. As Ambassador, he would report to the President through the Secretary of State and as Commander-in-Chief, through CINCPAC, the JCS and the Secretary of Defense.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Walt Rostow, Westmoreland, William C. Secret; Eyes Only. The letter is on the stationery of the Institute for Defense Analyses. In an attached covering note to the President, February 10, Rostow wrote: "Herewith Max Taylor's administrative recommendations should Gen. Westmoreland be made Ambassador in Saigon."

² The President discussed Vietnam with Taylor, Rostow, McNamara, and Rusk on January 31 from 2:20 to 3:20 p.m. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary) No notes of the meeting have been found.

b. Westmoreland will need three able assistants, an Army 4-star general to exercise direct command over the U.S. military effort, a civilian of Ambassadorial rank to run the U.S. civil field activities, now incorporated in the new Office of Civil Operations, and a senior State Department official to run the U.S. Mission in the usual manner of a Deputy Chief of Mission.

With regard to the conduct of civil field activities, I would be inclined to keep them for the time being separate from the military channel of command under the Office of Civil Operations. If after several months it becomes clear that this arrangement is not sufficiently cohesive, then it may be desirable to integrate the U.S. military and civil structures to provide a single channel of direction and resources leading from Saigon to U.S. agencies and activities in the field.

Hoping that these comments may be of some use in resolving this important question,³

Sincerely,

Maxwell D. Taylor

³ In a February 10 memorandum to the President responding to his request for commentary on the Taylor letter, Komer offered his full agreement with its conclusions. (Ibid., National Security File, Files of Robert Komer, Memos to the President, January–May 1967) In a February 11 memorandum to the President, Katzenbach termed as “unwise” the move to nominate Westmoreland, since it would indicate a military dominance over the essentially political struggle by giving the appearance of a “military occupation” of Vietnam. (Ibid., Files of Walt Rostow, Westmoreland, William C.)

38. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, February 6, 1967.

SUBJECT

Hanoi "Proposal" Through Senator Kennedy²

I have not seen the full text of the *Newsweek* report on this matter.³ However, news stories, for example the *Washington Post* piece on page one today, indicate that *Newsweek* went well beyond the true facts.

We have a copy of the Kennedy interview with a French Foreign Ministry official which is clearly the basis of this story. The text of the conversation is attached.⁴

The French official in question is M. Manac'h who is Asian Director of the Quai. The meeting occurred on January 31. Manac'h was accompanied by Mr. Brethes of the Quai. The Senator was accompanied by Mr. Van Den Heuvel. Foreign Service Officer John Dean of the American Embassy interpreted.

At no point did Manac'h profess to be speaking for the North Vietnamese. He underlined that what he was giving the Senator was his own "personal interpretation" and he also said that the formula of "three slices" was his "own invention." The heart of the Manac'h theory was:

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Negotiations. Secret. A handwritten "L" on the memorandum indicates that the President saw it.

² The President, Katzenbach, and Rostow met with Senator Robert Kennedy that day from 4:34 p.m. through 5:52 p.m. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary) A half hour before the meeting, Rusk advised the President to have "a witness" present in the meeting with Kennedy. (Ibid., Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and Rusk, February 6, 1967, 4:04 p.m., Tape F67.06, Side A, PNO 2) The President told Rusk that Kennedy sought only to use such a meeting as a "platform" for a new peace proposal that the Senator would make. Johnson was also concerned about Kennedy "leaking" information. (Ibid., Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and Rusk, February 6, 1967, 3:30 p.m., Tape F67.06, Side A, PNO 1) The meeting was off-the-record, but an account of it appears in Arthur Schlesinger's *Robert Kennedy and His Times* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), pp. 768–769.

³ The February 5 issue of *Newsweek* reported that Kennedy had received a message from Mai Van Bo through the French Government suggesting that peace talks would begin once the bombing of the DRV ceased.

⁴ The attached text of the conversation is in telegram 11650 from Paris, February 2. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S) Full reports on Kennedy's discussions with Manac'h and Sainteny are in memoranda of conversation, January 30 and 31, prepared by First Secretary of the Embassy in Paris John Dean, in the Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXV.

(1) If the United States stopped bombing the North, Hanoi would be willing to talk with the United States, and this could produce a “system of balanced de-escalation.”

(2) The next “slice” would be a discussion of the situation in South Viet-Nam.

(3) The third “slice” would involve an “overall settlement.”

Senator Kennedy apparently feels he was misled in estimating the importance of the French theory by the comment of the Foreign Service Officer, Mr. Dean. At one point, Manac’h said he thought Hanoi was telling us: “If the Americans really want to get in touch with the Democratic Republic of North Viet-Nam, it will suffice if they definitively and unconditionally stopped bombing North Viet-Nam. Then talks would be possible between the United States and North Viet-nam.”

Mr. Dean commented at that point: “That seems very new and very interesting to me, and I am taking the liberty of calling Senator Kennedy’s attention to it.” He then asked if the North Vietnamese had told the French specifically of their intention to “divide the problems into slices.”

Manac’h replied it was “obviously my personal interpretation.”

Mr. Dean’s interjection may have misled Senator Kennedy, but Manac’h’s stress on this being his “own invention” would have seemed to have brought the thing back into perspective. Apparently, it didn’t.

The three point formula, it is clear, *was not* a message from the North Vietnamese but rather the French interpretation of the situation as they see it. We do not know how the story was leaked to *Newsweek*. As you know, both the French Foreign Ministry and the North Vietnamese representative in Paris have denied that they passed any message from Hanoi to Senator Kennedy.

State believes the stories emanated from a member of the Senator’s staff.

Under Secretary Katzenbach will be seeing Senator Kennedy this afternoon.

Walt

39. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Rostow) to President Johnson and Secretary of State Rusk¹

Washington, February 6, 1967, 8 p.m.

Mr. President:

Mr. Secretary:

John Walsh of State has talked on the secure phone to Chet Cooper.² The situation is as follows:

1. After the formal meeting Wilson and Kosygin met.³ Wilson had been pressing Kosygin for a firm commitment that they would negotiate if we stopped bombing.

2. Kosygin later said he called Hanoi and got that commitment. He then pressed Wilson to join him in a statement to Washington asking for us to stop bombing in the North in return for Hanoi entering into negotiations. Wilson refused. But Kosygin states that he will table tomorrow at 4:00 in the afternoon, London time, a draft of this type.

3. Wilson wants to know:

—On what language would we insist? Could we furnish a draft?

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Sunflower Plus [2 of 2]. Top Secret. A handwritten "L" on the memorandum indicates that the President saw it. On February 4 Bruce and Cooper met with Prime Minister Wilson and Foreign Secretary Brown to discuss the impending Kosygin visit. As a means of making the DRV more amenable toward negotiations, they suggested that the British could press the Soviets on the need to "insure Hanoi" against Chinese recriminations if in fact the North Vietnamese decided to move toward negotiations. Wilson and Brown were also informed about the U.S. Government's direct contact with the North Vietnamese Embassy in Moscow, although they were advised not to reveal their knowledge of it to Kosygin. (Telegram 6271 from London, February 4; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER) In telegram 6272 from London, February 4, Cooper reported on his review and approval of the brief that Wilson would use with Kosygin which emphasized the willingness of the U.S. Government to extend "private assurances" to the DRV. (Ibid.) In telegram 131698 to London, February 5, the Department cautioned: "May we assume that you made clear to them that private and direct message we received was even more conditional than public or third country messages." (Ibid.)

² Cooper's reports to Washington were sent in telegrams 6315 from London, February 6, and 6316 from London, February 7. Cooper met with Wilson and his Ministers immediately after the Prime Minister's meeting with Kosygin ended and reviewed the Kosygin meeting with Wilson later that evening over dinner. (Both *ibid.*)

³ Telegram 132572 to Moscow, February 7, contained a text of Wilson's February 6 message to Johnson on his meetings with Kosygin. Wilson reported that he met with Kosygin informally in the afternoon, at the plenary session, and for a private talk at the end of a dinner he had given for the Soviet Premier. According to Wilson, Kosygin's statements reflected a dramatic shift in favor of negotiations by the Soviets. He also reported that Kosygin would prepare a message pressing President Johnson to meet the offer put forth by Trinh in his interview with Burchett. (Ibid.)

—Did we have anything concrete in mind in the President's press conference remarks that he is prepared to stop "for almost any reciprocal action";⁴

—If we want him to be tough, he will be tough.⁵

4. Kosygin says the Russians are ready to underwrite Hanoi's commitment to talk if we stop bombing.

Walt

My reaction: This is obviously a pressure play which we should take seriously but not react to with excessive haste. Also, if we are going to enter into counter-drafting, we ought to get the draft Wilson is talking about.

⁴ See the President's press conference in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1967*, Book I, pp. 128–134.

⁵ In White House telegram CAP 67038, February 7, the President responded that the administration planned to inform the North Vietnamese directly of the following: "if they will agree to an assured stoppage of infiltration into South Viet Nam, we will stop the bombing of North Viet Nam and stop further augmentation of U.S. forces in South Viet Nam." Johnson underscored that he wanted Wilson to support this position in his talks with Kosygin. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Sunflower & Sunflower Plus) The text of the Johnson letter to Wilson was also sent to Bruce and Cooper in telegram 132481 to London, February 7. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET; the full text of this cable and the Johnson letter to Wilson are printed in Herring, *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 29–31) Cooper read the President's statement of the Phase A–Phase B formula to Brown on the morning of February 7. (Telegram 6321 from London; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER)

40. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in the Soviet Union¹

Washington, February 7, 1967, 2:15 p.m.

132608. 1. Please arrange delivery at once to DRV Chargé of following letter:²

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER. Top Secret; Flash; Nodis; Sunflower Plus. Drafted by William Bundy, cleared by Rostow and Read, and approved by Rusk.

² Akalovsky acted as the intermediary in arranging a meeting between Guthrie and Le Chang, which took place at 1 a.m. on February 8 and lasted for 22 minutes. The account of the arrangement of the meeting is in telegram 3408 from Moscow, February 8. (Ibid.)

Text

His Excellency Ho Chi Minh, President, Democratic Republic of Vietnam

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to you in the hope that the conflict in Vietnam can be brought to an end. That conflict has already taken a heavy toll—in lives lost, in wounds inflicted, in property destroyed, and in simple human misery. If we fail to find a just and peaceful solution, history will judge us harshly.

Therefore, I believe that we both have a heavy obligation to seek earnestly the path to peace. It is in response to that obligation that I am writing directly to you.

We have tried over the past several years, in a variety of ways and through a number of channels, to convey to you and your colleagues our desire to achieve a peaceful settlement. For whatever reasons, these efforts have not achieved any results.

It may be that our thoughts and yours, our attitudes and yours, have been distorted or misinterpreted as they passed through these various channels. Certainly that is always a danger in indirect communication.

There is one good way to overcome this problem and to move forward in the search for a peaceful settlement. That is for us to arrange for direct talks between trusted representatives in a secure setting and away from the glare of publicity. Such talks should not be used as a propaganda exercise but should be a serious effort to find a workable and mutually acceptable solution.

In the past two weeks, I have noted public statements by representatives of your government suggesting that you would be prepared to enter into direct bilateral talks with representatives of the US Government, provided that we ceased “unconditionally” and permanently our bombing operations against your country and all military actions against it. In the last day, serious and responsible parties have assured us indirectly that this is in fact your proposal.

Let me frankly state that I see two great difficulties with this proposal. In view of your public position, such action on our part would inevitably produce worldwide speculation that discussions were under way and would impair the privacy and secrecy of those discussions. Secondly, there would inevitably be grave concern on our part whether your government would make use of such action by us to improve its military position.

With these problems in mind, I am prepared to move even further towards an ending of hostilities than your Government has proposed in either public statements or through private diplomatic channels. I am prepared to order a cessation of bombing against your country and

the stopping of further augmentation of US forces in South Viet-Nam as soon as I am assured that infiltration into South Viet-Nam by land and by sea has stopped. These acts of restraint on both sides would, I believe, make it possible for us to conduct serious and private discussions leading toward an early peace.

I make this proposal to you now with a specific sense of urgency arising from the imminent New Year holidays in Viet-Nam. If you are able to accept this proposal I see no reason why it could not take effect at the end of the New Year, or Tet, holidays. The proposal I have made would be greatly strengthened if your military authorities and those of the Government of South Viet-Nam could promptly negotiate an extension of the Tet truce.

As to the site of the bilateral discussions I propose, there are several possibilities. We could, for example, have our representatives meet in Moscow where contacts have already occurred. They could meet in some other country such as Burma. You may have other arrangements or sites in mind, and I would try to meet your suggestions.

The important thing is to end a conflict that has brought burdens to both our peoples, and above all to the people of South Viet-Nam. If you have any thoughts about the actions I propose, it would be most important that I receive them as soon as possible.

Sincerely, LBJ

End Text.

2. For your own background, you should know that this proposal arises from Kosygin/Wilson discussions (cables being repeated septels) in London on Monday³ and today. Kosygin has pressed Wilson hard that Hanoi—allegedly in direct contact with Kosygin twice on Monday—really means its proposal to talk if we stop the bombing. We have pointed out to the British, and believe they accept, that this is not possible. We have already conveyed to the British the essence (without text or reference to exact form) of our counter proposal along the lines of this letter, and we have made it clear to them that we are conveying it directly to Hanoi at once through appropriate channels.⁴

Rusk

³ February 6.

⁴ The British were assured that the message to Ho was “identical” in terms of substance to the language used by the President in his February 6 letter to Wilson. (Telegram 133516 to London, February 8; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER) For the President’s letter to Wilson, see footnote 5, Document 39. When he met with Guthrie on February 8, Chang described the message as one that “contained points showing absence of goodwill on part of U.S.” by imposing conditions for a bombing cessation. (Telegram 3412 from Moscow, February 8; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER)

41. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, February 7, 1967, 8 p.m.

Mr. President:

We have a problem: real but soluble.

The British took our proposal of last night and put it into A–B form; that is:

- first bombing halt;
- then simultaneous stopping of infiltration and troop movements.

That is *not* how we stated it last night; or to Hanoi today.²

The reason: we gave Wilson and Brown the A–B formula and told them to peddle it in Moscow and, again, on this occasion.

I talked with Sec. Rusk and he is confident that if they, in fact, buy the A–B formula we can work it out to protect our interests.

I believe it can be done if we're short on the time-gap between A and B and mighty hard on verification.

If they buy anything, which I doubt, they'll buy the A–B formula rather than the tougher formula to Hanoi—where at lunch we virtually reversed the A and B. But that's a good initial bargaining position to be in—if bargaining it gets to be.

Walt

Attachment

London 6360, Feb. 7, 1967³

For the Secretary and Harriman from Cooper

1. With Ambassador Bruce went to Downing Street for briefing on afternoon session. Present were Wilson, Burke, Trend, Palliser, and Murray.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Sunflower & Sunflower Plus. Top Secret; Nodis; Sunflower.

² The Johnson administration preferred that Wilson place a strong emphasis upon mutual de-escalation in his talks with Kosygin. However, a private assurance from Kosygin that Moscow would "urge course of mutual de-escalation on Hanoi" would be acceptable. Of utmost importance was for Wilson "not to sign on to anything which calls for unilateral action by U.S." (Telegram 132521 to London, February 7; *ibid.*)

³ The text is a copy retyped by the White House. The original of the telegram is in National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER.

2. The earlier part of the afternoon session was devoted to continuation of Soviet-British bilateral issues and only an hour or so devoted to Vietnam. Kosygin did not table a draft message to the President as he said he would do. Rather, he gave a pro-forma restatement of his earlier position on importance of the Vietnamese statements to Burchett.

3. Wilson read from his prepared briefing notes. The exposition of the Phase A–Phase B formula was changed from the version contained in my para. 5 London 6329.⁴ It was felt that it would be worth spelling this out in the simplest possible terms. The final text follows:

“Extract from statement by British Prime Minister at meeting with Mr. Kosygin on Feb. 7, 1967

... I am now satisfied that the Americans would now be prepared to move to further actions to strengthen mutual confidence if they were able to secure some assurance that this move would be reciprocated by the other side. For instance, I believe that they are now seeking to get word to Hanoi on the following lines. They recognize the need for a first and visible step. They further recognize that this step must mean the cessation of the bombing. This I believe they would do, and they recognize that it must be presented as being done unconditionally. Therefore we have to use our ingenuity to divorce in presentation the stopping of the bombing from the consequential actions. Yet you and I know that the consequential actions are essential if we are to get the bombing stopped.

The consequential actions are as follows. The United States are willing to stop the build-up of their forces in the South if they are assured that the movement of North Vietnamese forces from the North to the South will stop at the same time. Essentially therefore the two stages are kept apart. But because the United States Government know that the second stage will follow, they will therefore be able first to stop the bombing, even if there is a short period between the first stage and the actions to be taken by both sides in the second stage. There would be balanced concessions in the second stage; the first stage would be carried out by the United States alone; but the United States would only carry out the first stage because they would know that the second stage would follow within a short period of time.

The entry of American reinforcements to Vietnam can be easily observed. Therefore there could be no doubt on the part of the North Vietnamese that the Americans were keeping their part of the bargain.

The North Vietnamese action in the second stage would be seen as in response to the United States action in the second stage but it would be the result of a prior secret assurance.”

⁴ In telegram 6329 from London, February 7, Cooper described his review with Wilson of the brief the Prime Minister would use in the afternoon session. In paragraph 5, Cooper reported that Wilson would inform Kosygin that the U.S. Government would not only halt the bombing as a first step but would also stop the further build-up of its forces in South Vietnam if it could get like assurances from the DRV. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Sunflower Plus)

4. Kosygin showed considerable interest in this formulation. He evidently had not understood it when Brown presented it to him last November. He asked Wilson to repeat it and then asked Wilson to deliver the text to him in writing this evening. This has been done. The British are virtually certain that Kosygin is going to transmit this to Hanoi. They hope that on Thursday⁵ afternoon when talks resume Kosygin will have a reply from Hanoi.

5. I was asked if we were sending a similar message to Hanoi. I said that I could not say for sure, but the implication of the President's communication to the Prime Minister was that such a message would be sent. The British hope that if any questions arise as to differences in the formulation of Phase A and Phase B as worked out today in London, and the formulation forwarded to Hanoi by Washington, Hanoi be told that the British text was authoritative in substance, although there may be stylistic or translation differences from the U.S. version.

⁵ February 9.

42. Editorial Note

On February 7, 1967, Pope Paul VI sent a letter to President Johnson expressing the hope that the Tet truce would lead to negotiations. The Pope also transmitted similar messages the next day to Chief of State Nguyen Van Thieu of the Republic of Vietnam and President Ho Chi Minh of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. For the text of these letters, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1967*, pages 850–852, and telegram 4106 from Rome, February 8. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S) President Johnson responded to the Pope's appeal in a February 8 letter, which reads:

"Your Holiness:

"I deeply appreciate your message, which is a great source of spiritual support. I devoutly share your wish that the suspension of hostilities over the Lunar New Year may be extended and may open the way to negotiations for a just and stable peace.

"The Governments of the United States and the Republic of Vietnam, together with others, are devoting intensive efforts to this end. As you know, the Government of Vietnam has twice signified its readiness to discuss an extension of the truce with representatives of the other side.

"We are prepared to talk at any time and place, in any forum, with the object of bringing peace to Vietnam; however I know you would

not expect us to reduce military action unless the other side is willing to do likewise.

"We are prepared to discuss the balanced reduction in military activity, the cessation of hostilities, or any practical arrangements which could lead to these results.

"We shall continue our efforts for a peaceful and honorable settlement until they are crowned with success.

"With great respect, Lyndon B. Johnson"

This message was transmitted in telegram 133530 to Saigon, February 8. (Ibid.) The February 13 reply to the Pope from Ho Chi Minh reads as follows:

"Your Holiness:

"I wish to thank Your Holiness for his message of February 8, 1967. In his message Your Holiness expressed the wish to see an early peaceful solution to the Viet-Nam question.

"Our people sincerely love peace in order to build our country in independence and freedom. However, the U.S. imperialists have sent to South Viet-Nam half a million U.S. and satellite troops and used more than 600,000 puppet troops to wage a war against our people.

"They have committed monstrous crimes. They have used the most barbarous arms such as napalm, chemical products and toxic gases, to massacre our compatriots and burn down our villages, pagodas, churches, hospitals, schools. Their acts of aggression have grossly violated the 1954 Geneva agreements on Viet-Nam and have seriously menaced peace in Asia and the world.

"To defend their independence and peace the Vietnamese people are resolutely fighting against the aggressors. They are confident that justice will triumph. The U.S. imperialists must put an end to their aggression in Viet-Nam, end unconditionally and definitively the bombing and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, withdraw from South Viet-Nam all American and satellite troops, recognize the South Viet-Nam National Front for Liberation and let the Vietnamese people settle themselves their own affairs. Only in such conditions can real peace be restored in Viet-Nam.

"It is my hope that Your Holiness, in the name of humanity and justice, will use his high influence to urge that the U.S. Government respect the national rights of the Vietnamese people, namely peace, independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity as recognized by the 1954 Geneva agreements on Viet-Nam.

"With my high regards, Ho Chi Minh"

The text of Ho's reply is in telegram 137496 to Saigon, February 15. (Ibid., POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER)

43. Summary Notes of the 568th Meeting of the National Security Council¹

Washington, February 8, 1967, 11:05 a.m.

Bombing of North Vietnam—North Africa

In opening the meeting, Walt Rostow summarized the history of U.S. bombing of North Vietnam, citing:

1. The Kennedy statement at Fort Bragg referring to the U.S. Government's position at the time of the Geneva Conference.²
2. The Taylor Report, 1961³—that part which discussed what might be necessary if current moves did not work in Vietnam.
3. The Geneva Accords of 1962.⁴
4. The February, 1965, decisions.⁵
5. The Johns Hopkins speech.⁶

General Wheeler briefed on the military objectives of our bombing of North Vietnam. His statement, verbatim, is attached.⁷ It is an accurate and complete record of what he told Council members. He concluded by saying that bombing of North Vietnam is an integral part of the U.S. war effort. A North Vietnamese promise to talk is not enough to lead us to halt the bombing.

Secretary McNamara: Bombing of North Vietnam could be stopped if we got in return a symmetrical de-escalation.

Secretary Rusk: Responded to the President's request to review our peace probes:

We have undertaken dozens of probes. We have been in touch with the Pope, with Secretary General U Thant, and the United Nations. Our position is entirely clear and it is summarized in the fourteen-point paper which we have now made public.⁸ The other side is not interested. We have had no comeback from them. We have used third parties without success. There is a readiness of the North Vietnamese to receive our position, but there is no indication of their changing their public position.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, NSC Meetings File, Vol. 4, Tab 50. Top Secret; Sensitive; For the President Only. According to the President's Daily Diary the meeting lasted from 10:32 to 11:08 a.m. (Ibid.)

² Not further identified.

³ See *Foreign Relations*, 1961–1963, vol. I, Document 210.

⁴ Text in *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1962, pp. 1075–1083.

⁵ See in particular *Foreign Relations*, 1964–1968, vol. II, Document 98.

⁶ See *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson*, 1965, Book I, pp. 394–399.

⁷ Not found.

⁸ See footnote 2, Document 7.

The Poles have put out fragmentary and false accounts of a probe which is called “Marigold”. All our efforts have encountered silence. We have had no serious response, private or public.

We have come to feel that the North Vietnamese may think we are panicking. This risk we took. There is no evidence that Hanoi is ready to stop the fighting. The North Vietnamese want sanctuary in the north without giving anything, at the same time continuing the war in South Vietnam.

The President: We have our people all over the world who are ready to listen. We have pursued every hint that the North Vietnamese were willing to give up something if we give up something. Hanoi is trying to force us to give up the bombing of North Vietnam. We will keep on until we get something from the North Vietnamese.

The Council then turned to the second item on the agenda, i.e., North Africa. Notes of this discussion follow on the next page.⁹

Bromley Smith

⁹ Printed in *Foreign Relations*, 1964–1968, vol. XXIV, Document 4.

44. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, February 8, 1967, 0715Z.

17618. 1. I paid a “Tet call” on Thieu, having had hints that he wanted to see me to talk about the political future in Viet-Nam.

2. After wishing him a happy “Year of the Ram,” I found that the hint had been correct because he started in immediately on the political outlook here, saying that the present government, while not elected, had nonetheless been stable, and as efficacious as a Vietnamese government could be at this stage in the country’s development.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 15 VIET S. Secret; Priority; Exdis. Received at 4:21 a.m. and passed to the White House, DOD, and CIA at 5 a.m. In a covering note transmitting a retyped copy of this telegram to the President, Rostow wrote: “Once again the Vietnamese—this time Thieu—show themselves to be smart and level-headed. You will wish, I believe, to read every word of this. I have been talking for some time to Sec. Rusk about the need to treat Ky and Thieu with more confidence. We shall need that mutual confidence in the days ahead—quite as much as Wilson’s, for example.” (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. XV, Memos (A))

3. For the future, he said, everyone expected the new government under the Constitution to be even better. To be sure, this would not automatically take place. A democratic government could be worse, but it could also mean improvement, efficiency, responsibility, freedom from corruption.

4. Many people were thinking about a formula for the future and there seemed to be general agreement that there should be a “marriage” between the civil and the military. Assuming, he said, there is a civilian President, it would nonetheless be necessary for the military to hold certain Ministries, notably Defense, Revolutionary Development, and Information. This was not for any symbolic reasons, but simply because it was indispensable that these three be done efficiently for the sake of the war, and this was the only way in Viet-Nam at the present time that it could be assured.

5. Also it would not be practicable to elect the province chiefs right away. That might come later, and if an effective civilian province chief could be found, he could always be appointed. Of course, all military could withdraw when the war was over.

6. I stressed the importance from the standpoint of American opinion to have really adequate civilian representation in whatever “ticket” emerged for the executive branch. He spared me the embarrassment of saying that for Thieu and Ky to emerge after the elections as President and Prime Minister would make a very bad impression. He said himself that this would make the whole constitutional effort look like a trumped up affair. He believed that there ought to be a “coupling” of civilian and military in some way or other, using the office of the President, Vice President, and Prime Minister. He also believed the army should pick a couple and back it.²

7. *Comment:* I went as far as I thought I should go and limited myself to two points: A) that there should be strong civilian representation in whatever “ticket” emerges and B) that the army should stay united, believe it is a mistake for us to back or oppose any of the candidates who appear to have even a remote chance of being considered. Thieu was obviously playing his cards close to his chest on his own political plans. To me, as to Vietnamese, he has not divulged any clear indication of his intentions. Tran Van Do believes Thieu will hold off

² In telegram 133730 to Saigon, February 8, the Department foresaw a contest between a slate headed by Huong and backed by Ky against one led by Thieu as offering a fair choice to the public of South Vietnam. The Department’s major concern was whether such an occurrence would split military support for the new civilian government. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 15–1 VIET S)

on such a decision until after the Constitution is finished. *End comment.*³

8. Having said all this, which he obviously wanted to get off his chest, Thieu paused and I took up the matter which had been concerning me, which was the widespread worry here in Viet-Nam springing from all the published rumors that we were conducting peace activities without consulting them. I told him substantially what I had said to Ky yesterday morning (Saigon 17482).⁴

9. Thieu said Vietnamese opinion was extremely sensitive and touchy about these new stories, notably the part about recognizing the NLF as a separate entity. Indeed he said that if there was a civil government in Viet-Nam now, it would be constrained to make a public statement repudiating the American Senators who are talking in this way. One advantage of having a military government was that nobody questioned their anti-Communism, and that it was not necessary for them to repudiate the Senators.

10. But we should not be under any illusions, he added. There is great worry among many elements of Vietnamese opinion and the critics of the government, notably the Communists themselves, are constantly spreading rumors that the government is trying to bring about a coalition. Viet Cong propaganda everywhere was stressing the importance of Senator Fulbright as "a messenger of President Johnson," and stressing the importance of Senator Kennedy as a leading mem-

³ In telegram 17704 from Saigon, February 9, Lodge suggested that the U.S. Government was overlooking a salient factor in Vietnamese political life by putting forward such a desire for "civilian" participation. "In speaking of the role of the military, we perhaps put too much emphasis on their military power and too little on the fact that the military is in many respects the most experienced, cohesive and reliable of the nation building forces in this country," the Ambassador stressed. "There would be no 'Republic of Vietnam' without it." Therefore, he concluded, the military's presence in electoral politics should not be reduced but rather channeled into a genuine power-sharing arrangement with the civilian politicians. (Ibid., POL 21-4 VIET S) In telegram 18354 from Saigon, February 18, Lodge added that there could be no movement toward a popular government in South Vietnam without a political stability that would derive in most part from military support. An election that pitted Ky and Thieu on opposing tickets "could be a disaster which would jeopardize much that we have labored to build." Therefore, Ky's idea of building a consensus for a government-sponsored slate would have more attraction. Huong was the only civilian candidate taken seriously, but Lodge doubted that Ky would in fact support Huong's quest for the presidency. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXVI, Memos) However, Huong later told an Embassy official that he did not believe that Ky would take second place on a ticket headed by a civilian and doubted whether the military itself would truly give up power. (Telegram 19123 from Saigon, February 28; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 14 VIET S) Ky assured Lodge that he would support a popularly elected government. (Telegram 18936, February 25; *ibid.*, POL 27 VIET S)

⁴ Dated February 7. (Ibid.)

ber of the party in power, and while he, Thieu, understood the way our system worked, he absolutely despaired of making Vietnamese understand that a Senator who is Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, and a member of the same party as the President, could say things totally independent of the President.

11. This made matters very difficult, he said, when it came to national reconciliation. In fact, when Prime Minister Ky recently spoke of members of the NLF becoming Ministers, he was at once subjected to a tremendous barrage of criticism—the violence of which was attributable to the impression made by Senator Fulbright.

12. Thieu was also disturbed about what would happen were a “cease-fire” to be offered. He recalled that at Geneva a cease-fire was proposed on the 1st of August to take effect in ten days, and during that ten days, 40 percent of the military personnel in Viet-Nam who had been fighting for nine years left. They could not wait the extra ten days. This could happen again with disastrous results, notably to the American troops. He believes that during the Year of the Ram, the North Vietnamese will do the minimum necessary to maintain themselves in the field militarily, but that their main effort would be to keep a peace offensive going, with “the help of such persons as the Pope and U Thant” and with the hope of diminishing President Johnson’s prestige, creating embarrassments for him, and then trying in 1968 to bring about President Johnson’s defeat. It will, he said, be an intricate and difficult thing to cope with.

13. Turning to the subject of reconciliation, he said that he had opened the door in his speech, and that tonight he would actually use the phrase. We should realize, however, that nothing big could be expected in the way of national reconciliation until people’s minds were really prepared for it. The ground needs a great deal of cultivation, and the Minister of Information must organize personnel and a program to do this. There is widespread suspicion of defectors, Chieu Hoi, etc. This is why the Chieu Hoi rate is “intermittent.” You will always get a big Chieu Hoi figure just before them [*Tet?*] because people want to go home and eat well, but it will slump back right after. Extensive psychological preparations are needed.

14. I then brought up the question of Vietnamese civilian casualties and said that I worried about it. I realized that casualties which were deliberately inflicted on civilians by the Viet Cong were in a different category from casualties accidentally inflicted by the Americans, but I could not help take what the Americans were doing to heart, and asked him whether he had any advice.

15. Thieu said that every sensible person realized that in all wars civilians were accidentally killed. This was true in this war not only as regards the Americans; but the armed forces of the Republic of Viet-

Nam themselves killed a certain number of civilians. It was unavoidable and everybody understood it. He seemed to think we were taking proper precautions. I asked him please to notify me if he thought there was something we could do that we were not doing.

16. He then said that on the question of placing U.S. troops at any given place in Viet-Nam, one must ask oneself: would they in fact do damage either as regards the economy, or morals, or deaths? It was for this reason that it had been decided to give the Americans the zones which were largely without population and to avoid the thickly settled areas. This was why the ARVN has been given the populated areas. People understood this. As far as immorality is concerned, this would not happen without the Vietnamese girls who don't have to behave in this way if they do not want to.

17. When he hears criticism of Americans, he can't help but "think of the difference between the tremendous amount of rape, rowdyism, arguments, drunkenness when 10,000 French were here, as compared with how little of this kind of thing there is with 400,000 Americans." The French, he said, had a colonial mentality. They wanted to be here as masters. There was no activity of theirs bearing even the remotest resemblance to our "civic action." The Americans come here well prepared psychologically, anxious to help and to do good and they do. (*Comment: I believe our U.S. military have a right to be pleased by this very sincere, very real and wholly unsolicited compliment. End comment.*)

Lodge

45. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, February 8, 1967, 0900Z.

17626. For the President from Lodge. Herewith my weekly telegram:

A. Year of the Ram

1. Tomorrow is the beginning of Tet, the three day holiday which is the most important festival of the year—Year of the Ram—for all Vietnamese. Saigon is in a festive mood, whole blocks covered solidly with brilliant Tet flowers and fusillades of firecrackers ringing constantly on every street. There appears to be no threat here now, as in

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Priority; Nodis.

the recent past, that the city might soon be in Communist hands, even though terrorism is common. There are high hopes for constitutional government. I have less news this Wednesday than at any time in the last year and a half. I hope that “no news is good news.”

B. Constitution

2. Before recessing February 3 for a ten day Tet vacation, the Assembly moved about half way through Chapter III of the Constitution dealing with legislative powers and organization. The Assembly has so far decided that the lower house will have from 100 to 200 members and the upper house 30 to 60. An unusual provision is that members of the upper house will be elected at-large from the whole nation rather than from electoral districts. Since most well-known political figures live in Saigon, this provision could mean a “Saigon senate” with little rural representation.

3. Representatives of the Assembly and the Directorate have been meeting intermittently to exchange views and to try to iron out their differences on constitutional provisions. Both Deputies and members of the Directorate have told us that broad areas of agreement exist, but some important disagreements remain. A letter from General Thieu to Assembly Chairman Phan Khac Suu summarizes some of the Directorate’s objections to the first draft of the Constitution. The most important of these concern the role of the military in politics, the power of the legislature to force removal of the Prime Minister, the power to declare emergencies, and the abolition of censorship.

4. Members of the Directorate have told us that agreement has been reached on the important question of the legislature’s power to force removal of the Prime Minister. They say that the National Assembly may “propose” the dismissal of the Cabinet, but the proposal is not binding on the President.

C. Revamping the Army

5. The decisive factor in defeating the Huk uprising in the Philippines was that Magsaysay was able to get the Philippine army to behave itself—to be generous and considerate of the welfare of the civilians. The absence of such a helpful attitude on the part of the ARVN here has been a major problem.²

² In a memorandum describing a meeting with members of S/P in early January, Lodge underscored the urgency for retooling the ARVN. “It was clear that any revamping of the ARVN must be done despite the present layer of generals, young as they are,” the Ambassador argued. “It took 37 years to depose the horse in the American Army, and it will take as long to sell the generals on the necessary revamping of the ARVN. It can only be accomplished by bringing up new leaders from below.” (Memorandum from Allan Evans, Deputy Director for Research, INR, to Hughes and Denney, January 13; Department of State, INR/REA/SA Files: Lot 75 D 378, POL-1 General Policy, Background SVN 1967)

[Here follows discussion of a report on the renovation of the ARVN, casualties, Chieu Hoi, economic matters, and peace talks.]

Lodge

46. Telegram From the Embassy in the United Kingdom to the Department of State¹

London, February 9, 1967, 0241Z.

6399. For Secretary from Cooper.

1. Met with Brown at his residence following Kosygin dinner. Found myself in middle of telephone argument with Downing Street re order of precedence of official cars. Retired to kitchen to help Mrs Brown make tea. I won't trouble Department with other bits of background and atmosphere at this late hour. Gore Booth and Murray arrived 2330.

2. Brown (and FonOff types, though to lesser extent) impressed with Kosygin statement in Guildhall speech today that "... the Soviet Govt considers now as in 1954, Great Britain jointly with Soviet Union and other countries, could make her contribution to the settlement of the VN question on the basis of the Geneva Agreements which must be observed by USA."²

3. Brown feels Sovs may be signalling a readiness to convene Geneva. At private session tomorrow (10 am Wilson and Kosygin to be joined at 1045 by Brown and Soldatov) Brown will ask Wilson to press Sovs on whether this was a serious hint that with or without Chinese they would be prepared to join UK in call for early convocation of Geneva. After much discussion Brown asked for draft written proposal to be submitted to him and Wilson prior to 10 am meeting.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 27-14 VIET/SUNFLOWER. Top Secret; Flash; Nodis; Sunflower. Received at 10:13 p.m. on February 8.

² See footnote 2, Document 48. In a conversation with Dobrynin at 11 a.m. on February 8, Kohler cautioned that President Johnson was concerned that any negative pronouncements by Kosygin might "complicate the President's problems here connected with relations between the two countries." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Sunflower, Vol. II) Harriman interpreted the Kosygin speech as a positive development. In a February 8 memorandum to the President, Harriman suggested that Kosygin had to criticize the United States publicly: "Kosygin can perhaps establish more credibility in Hanoi if he makes this type of statement particularly when abroad. The important thing in dealing with these Communist countries is what they tell us privately and what they do." (Ibid., Amb. Harriman—Negotiations Comm.)

4. Gore Booth, Murray and I went back to FonOff and prepared following (they understand very clearly that this does not have any official endorsement of USG despite my participation in drafting):

“The two co-chairmen will announce immediately that they:

A. Invite the US to assure them that the bombing of NVN will stop;

B. Invite the North Vietnamese and the US to assure the co-chairmen that they will take mutual and equivalent steps to halt the augmentation of their forces in SVN.

C. If all the foregoing assurances are promptly received the two co-chairmen will invite the members of the 1954 Geneva Conference to reconvene in Geneva on 15 Feb to work out a settlement of the present conflict.”

5. If Sovs will not buy this, Brown will press them to endorse Phase A–Phase B formula as they formulated it yesterday.

6. Following FonOff drafting session went to Downing Street and caught Wilson on way up to bed. Informed him of contents “Sunflower Plus” and of Washington view re his Commons performance. Wilson said there was more (or less) to story than Wash had gotten. Suggested I get together with Palliser for accurate account, which I will do.

7. Please provide any guidance prior to 0930 London time.

Bruce

47. Telephone Conversation Between President Johnson and Secretary of Defense McNamara¹

Washington, February 9, 1967, 8:29 a.m.

McNamara: There’s several hundred junks, allegedly up around 900, that have been observed there. Of the 900, let’s say a hundred or so are fairly substantial junks that may be carrying—roughly a hundred feet long, that size. The Chiefs are very disturbed about it. CINCPAC has recommended resumption of aerial bombardment and naval fire in what they call the Sea Dragon area, which runs from the 17th parallel up to the 19th parallel, roughly 120 miles in there, which in the past has been authorized for naval fire and of course air bom-

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recordings of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and McNamara, February 9, 1967, 8:29 a.m., Tape F67.05, Side A, PNO 4. No classification marking. This transcript was prepared in the Office of the Historian specifically for this volume.

bardment. The Chiefs say that these movements are unique, that they have not been observed in these quantities before, either night or day, and that it's quite clear that the North Vietnamese are achieving significant advantages and gains by this action, and therefore they should be authorized immediately, during the remainder of Tet, to engage in fire.

I just wanted you to be informed on this. I think that it's almost impossible for us to accept this recommendation and act on it, but conceivably later today you should give the Chiefs, or Buzz [Wheeler] at least, an opportunity to talk to you about this in the presence of Dean [Rusk] and myself, probably. The counter to the Chiefs' argument, of course, is that this is what you would expect them to do, that there's no question but what they pay a price for movements outside of the Tet period because of our air strikes, and it's perfectly natural for them to try to move during the Tet period when they don't pay that price. And, furthermore, the movements involved appear to be over a rather limited area, roughly 50 miles of coastline from one river estuary to another river estuary, and if they moved as much as the Chiefs say they are moving, it still isn't of great significance in the overall battle of the South. Beyond all that, you're engaged in a very delicate set of relationships here between the Pope and Kosygin and Wilson and the American people and the international community, and it'd almost be impossible for you for this reason to, and with as little problem as this, to authorize such fire and obvious breaking of the truce. But it is a serious problem—relationships with military commanders, and I wanted you to be informed of it. I'll try to take care of it during the day.

President: All right. I expect we ought to have a meeting and talk to them about it. Is there anything in the agreement that would preclude this?

McNamara: No, no, it didn't . . .

President: When you make the agreement, do you anticipate [it]?

McNamara: Well, the answer is yes, I anticipate it, and the Chiefs, when they, in the first place, they were opposed to the truce to start with, you'll recall. Secondly, they've said that if we had it, we ought to have authority to fire in the event if the North was doing anything that was disadvantageous to us, whether it was technically a violation of the truce or not. I would say that this is not technically a violation of the truce. It is disadvantageous to us in the sense that they're moving without cost to themselves. So, it was anticipated, and the Chiefs initially wanted to act as they're now recommending. The counter to their position is that we're doing exactly the same thing. We're reinforcing our forces just as North Vietnam is reinforcing theirs, and in the remaining period of the truce, 2 or 3 days, this just can't penalize us in any important way. But it isn't easy to sell that to the military commanders.

President: Have you had a meeting with them?

McNamara: I've just met with Buzz. I haven't met with the other Chiefs.

President: Did you sell him?

McNamara: No. No. But that's just the first meeting. And he's a good, loyal individual and he'll take the orders that he's given. But I'm not—I don't—I doubt very much we can sell him in the sense of full agreement that we shouldn't go ahead. But why don't we let the day pass, and later in the day if it still seems serious, I'll give you a call, and we can try to set up a meeting.²

President: Okay, Bob.

McNamara: Bye.

² The President, McNamara, Rusk, Katzenbach, Vance, and Bundy met with Wheeler that afternoon from 1:12 p.m. to 2:07 p.m. No record of the meeting has been found, but apparently a decision was made against resumption. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary)

48. Telephone Conversation Between President Johnson and Secretary of State Rusk¹

Washington, February 9, 1967, 9:07 a.m.

President: What is your impression of [Kosygin's speech]?²

Rusk: Well, I think that he said what we expect him to say, and I think that his general tone was reasonably moderate for a fellow in his position.

President: I thought that he was rather restrained. I'm a little bit concerned, though, that he's got Wilson aboard. I think we're liable to be hearing further from them to stop the bombing, and they'll trade us our preachers and our youth and our psychological warfare offensive—they'll cut that down a little bit—if we stop our military action while they keep operating on our boys. That's about what it adds up to.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and Rusk, February 9, 1967, 9:07 a.m., Tape F67.05, Side A, PNO 5. No classification marking. This transcript was prepared in the Office of the Historian specifically for this volume.

² In a speech at Guildhall on February 8, Kosygin stated that the first step toward a settlement based upon the Geneva agreements would be the "unconditional cessation" of the U.S. bombing of the DRV. See *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1967*, pp. 851–852.

Rusk: That's what it sounds like. I don't think the British are going to jump aboard on that. We've got a—we've had a suggestion from them which is not good enough, and we'll be over to suggest a reply to it.

President: What did the British say?

Rusk: Well, they said they wanted to propose to the Russians that first, that the United States stop its bombing; secondly, that there be a commitment from both sides to stop the augmentation of their forces; and third, that then let them call a Geneva conference [like] 1954. Now the trouble with the second point is that augmentation is not good enough as a substitute for infiltration because that would mean that the other side would be free to go ahead with a rotation and sending arms and re-supply and all that kind of thing, you see. I think our original formulation—stopping infiltration—is the one we ought to stay with.

President: Didn't we bring augmentation onto ourselves though somewhere?

Rusk: Yeah, we said that we wouldn't augment, that we wouldn't augment, if they stopped infiltration.

President: So they'd just agree to not augment either.

Rusk: Yeah, but if they agree not to augment, they can still send in arms and rotate their men and do the things that we would have to do during that period. So I think our original language, or the Phase A–Phase B business, is still the thing we ought to stay with.

President: Now what's George Christian going to say about his definite proposal that we stop bombing? They're already moving him, heaven, and earth, and at 11 o'clock he'll go right into it, and I guess that . . .

Rusk: Why doesn't he just for the present read that paragraph in your reply to the Pope?³

President: I thought he might say that "I'm sure no one overlooked the fact that Mr. Kosygin agreed that it would be all right for the United States to agree to stop its military action, but he didn't comment on the other side stopping their military action, and I don't know whether he could really be serious in this or not—such a one-sided affair. And here's what the President said on this subject yesterday. It's amazing that he got no question in that direction and made no comment on it." Something like that.

Rusk: I think I'd say "noteworthy" rather than "amazing."

President: Well. All right.

³ See Document 42.

Rusk: All right. I think it's all right.

President: If you get a chance, write that sentence out and call George before 11 o'clock so it'll be careful, and I would really point up, though, that it's almost amusing that he would agree that we could stop and not mention what the other side would do, that that doesn't look like it's a two sided affair, and that it's noteworthy that he didn't even get a question on what the other side would do, and if he's proposing just to trade psychological warfare for military action, why we're not about to do it. If he's willing to trade military action for military action, we're willing to talk.

Rusk: Right. All right, sir.⁴

⁴ Rusk called Christian and read to him the following statement to be given to the press: "Mr. Kosygin commented on the military action the United States should take but made no mention of any military action the other side would take. It is somewhat surprising that he did not have a question on that point, or, if he had a question, did not deal with it." (Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Rusk and Christian, February 9, 1967, no time indicated, Tape F67.05, Side A, PNO 6) Rusk elaborated on this statement in a press conference that afternoon. For text of Rusk's statement, see Department of State *Bulletin*, February 27, 1967, pp. 317–322. At the end of the press conference, Rusk distributed copies of a restatement of the administration's Fourteen Points for Peace in Southeast Asia originally made on January 3, 1966, by Vice President Humphrey. For the 1966 version, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1966, pp. 740–742; for Rusk's restatement, see *ibid.*, 1967, pp. 856–858.

49. Telegram From the Embassy in the United Kingdom to the Department of State¹

London, February 9, 1967, 1439Z.

6411 Ref: 6406.² For Secretary and Harriman from Cooper.

1. There follows report of this morning's session obtained from Murray who was present. I have checked this against his notes.

2. Wilson and Kosygin had forty-five minutes alone. According to Wilson's summary of this private session given to Brown it was primarily procedural. It was agreed that no communiqué would be issued

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER. Top Secret; Flash; Nodis; Sunflower. Received at 10:23 a.m.

² Dated February 9. (*Ibid.*)

until after the meeting at Chequers on Sunday. Wilson reported that Kosygin made many harsh references re the Chinese.

3. When Brown (and Murray) joined the session at 1045 Wilson indicated, and Kosygin nodded in agreement, that they were now ready for "substantive discussions" on Vietnam, thereby giving Brown a pre-arranged cue. Brown then asked Kosygin whether his remarks about Geneva in his speech yesterday indicated the Russians were ready to reconvene the Geneva Conference, even if the Chinese refused to attend. Kosygin replied this was "not exactly" what he meant to imply. Kosygin, according to Murray's notes, said that in his speech yesterday "I proceeded upon the assumption that the main thing was for the UK and the Sov Union to assist the two sides to meet together after the bombing stopped. After this has been done there may be various proposals for moving further. The Geneva Conf could be convened even without China. We need not insist on Chinese participation." (Kosygin then made several uncomplimentary references to the way the Chinese felt about diplomatic procedures and forms.) Kosygin then went on to say that he "could not speak for Hanoi on this point." He emphasized that it was important to "do first things first. If we try to work out the tactics too early we might jeopardize everything . . . we might raise other problems such as China and Laos (according to Murray this is the first time Laos has been mentioned in any of the conversations)."

4. Brown then asked whether Kosygin felt that after the two sides had sat down and worked out something in their private talks, should the two co-chairmen then move? Kosygin agreed that this would probably be the appropriate time for a move by the two co-chairmen, but stressed again that their present task was to "get the two sides to the conference table after the bombing stops."

5. Brown then said that no bombing would be going on during Tet. In light of this, "thinking out loud, suppose the US should agree not to resume bombing, and both sides agreed to take mutual and equivalent steps, would Kosygin then agree to call a Geneva Conf on 15 Feb?"

6. Kosygin said that he would first want to know Hanoi's views before he committed himself. He reminded Brown that a Geneva conf would be "a complicated issue"; China will create difficulties and there are "Chinese troops in North Vietnam." There is also a pro-Chinese faction in Hanoi that would have to be dealt with. Kosygin then asked "has this been discussed with the Americans?" Brown said that if Kosygin could deliver his friends in Hanoi the British would try to "deliver the Americans".

7. Kosygin responded "I could send this to Hanoi, but I am concerned about the difficulties." He said he would like to "think it over,"

and asked if he could have the proposition in writing as early as possible today. Brown said he would do his best to get this to Kosygin later in the afternoon.

8. The next meeting will be at 1030 tomorrow morning. At this session the British plan to point out that they have now delivered two solid propositions to the Russians and presumably Hanoi. One of these provides for a private series of negotiations, the other a public one. Both involve mutual and equivalent steps of de-escalation. If Hanoi is serious about wanting to stop the war, the Russians have an obligation to provide Hanoi's reactions, and this should be done on an urgent basis.

9. The proposition that Brown is ready to submit in writing is literally the same as that sent to Wash last night. Request Wash reaction as soon as possible.

Bruce

50. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom¹

Washington, February 9, 1967, 1:45 p.m.

133907. London 6399, 6406, 6411² and relevant telcons.

1. We understand that at this morning's session Wilson or Brown probed Kosygin whether his remarks on possible role of co-chairmen had any significance and obtained strong impression that they were intended to have. We understand further that, based on this, British went ahead to read orally from draft public announcement along lines para 4, London 6399. In response to Kosygin inquiry, British said this formula did not have USG approval. Kosygin finally asked for British text. Although he did not refer to having USG acceptance of such text, we can only suppose that this was the underlying implication.

2. As we believe we have made clear to you, we have major doubts whether, if Hanoi in fact accepts the deal we have proposed, they will ask to have it nailed down in public through an announcement, and

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER. Top Secret; Immediate; Nodis; Sunflower Plus. Drafted by William Bundy; cleared by Harriman, Walt Rostow, and Read; and approved by Rusk.

² Telegrams 6399 and 6411 are printed as Documents 46 and 49; for telegram 6406, see footnote 2, Document 49.

might have additional misgivings about the Soviets doing so in the light of whatever degree of concern they still have about Chicom relations. We would suppose the latter factor would also operate strongly on the Soviets, since any public announcement would carry the unmistakable flavor that the Soviets had colluded with the US, through the UK, to put this deal across. In other words, you should impress on the British that while it may be possible to get Hanoi to accept our proposal, it by no means follows that they or the Soviets would wish a public announcement. We are inclined to interpret Soviet response as indicating a desire to see the US proposal spelled out clearly and in writing, which they could then use with Hanoi but in all probability later drawing back on the idea of a public announcement. British should be left in no doubt that, while we are most grateful for their serious considered efforts, they may well have to accept results rather than overt British participation in them.

3. With this evaluation in mind, we have reviewed text in para 4 of London 6399 and note that, like the British oral formula (London 6329, para 5),³ it speaks only of DRV stopping “augmentation of forces” in South Vietnam. This would leave way open for DRV to continue to send equipment without restrictions and also to send forces in the guise of rotation. Moreover, there would be no restraint whatsoever on political cadre and others who could be described as not technically uniformed “forces.” In light of these objections, any specific formula along these lines which the British might put forward would have to be amended along following lines:

“The two cochairmen will announce immediately that they:

- a. Invite the US to assure them that the bombing of North Vietnam will stop;
- b. Invite the North Vietnamese to assure the cochairmen that infiltration into South Vietnam will stop, and invite the US to assure the cochairmen that it will stop further augmentation of US forces in South Vietnam. (FYI: These are the operative parts both of our own message to the British (State 132481)⁴ and of our message to Hanoi.⁵ End FYI)
- c. If all the foregoing assurances are promptly received, the two cochairmen will invite members of the 1954 Geneva Conference to reconvene in Geneva on 15 February to work out a settlement of the present conflict.”

4. British should know further that while we have left subpara c of this text unchanged, recognizing that cochairmen status pertains to Geneva conference grouping, they must be as aware as we that Sovi-

³ See footnote 4, Document 41.

⁴ See footnote 5, Document 39.

⁵ Reference is to the letter from Johnson to Ho dispatched on February 8 through Moscow; for text, see Document 40.

ets and even Hanoi may have grave reservations about presence of Communist China at any conference. Moreover, we should leave British in no doubt that we might have to press strongly, if and when any multilateral grouping is convened, for inclusion of other appropriate nations who were not at Geneva in 1954. We do of course recognize that under present circumstances Chinese might not attend, but nonetheless we suppose Soviets or Hanoi may still be sensitive to their being included in the grouping. With these factors in mind, we wonder whether British might not find some more general language more realistic and more appealing to Soviets, referring perhaps to inviting "appropriate nations." While cochairmen mandate might be strictly construed to permit only reconvening of Geneva Conference, we believe broader interpretation could be sustained that cochairmen have mandate to take any action that could lead to peace and involve discussion of the 1954 and 1962 Geneva Accords as the basis for settlement.

5. Seeing as we do these possibly serious difficulties with a precise formulation of the deal—and doubting, as we do, that Hanoi will wish a really specific public announcement—you should tell British that we ourselves would be much more inclined to have them table the more general Phase A/Phase B formula.

6. As foregoing makes clear, we gravely doubt that Soviets really envisage any public announcement or that Hanoi would wish it. The main point is the British should leave Soviets in no doubt of essential elements of our proposal. In fact, we have one final and serious worry that the Soviets and Hanoi might interpret British suggestions of a public announcement as indicating that we ourselves visualize the deal being handled in this public way. You should make clear to the British, and they in turn must make clear to the Soviets, that while the British do understand that either of the above formulations reflect the US position accurately, the US has by no means urged a public statement unless the Soviets can completely ascertain that such a public statement is acceptable to Hanoi. We have always been very sensitive to Hanoi's desire that the stoppage of the bombing be ostensibly unilateral, and this fundamental reason for the whole Phase A/Phase B line of thought would be destroyed by a public statement in the only form in which we could accept it.

Rusk

51. Telegram From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to the Ambassador to the United Kingdom (Bruce) and Chester Cooper of the National Security Council Staff¹

Washington, February 10, 1967.

Please pass literally eyes only Amb. Bruce and Mr. Cooper.

To meet 10:30 a.m. signal to Kosygin we are requesting courtesy of this irregular means of transmission. Formulation as cleared here at highest level and comments follow:²

A) The United States will order a cessation of bombing of North Vietnam as soon as they are assured that infiltration from North Vietnam to South Vietnam has stopped. This assurance can be communicated in secret if North Vietnam so wishes.

B) Within a few days (with a period to be agreed with the two sides before the bombing stops) the United States will stop further augmenting their force in South Vietnam. The cessation of bombing of North Vietnam is an action which will be immediately apparent. This requires that the stoppage of infiltration become public very quickly thereafter. If Hanoi is unwilling to announce the stoppage of infiltration, the United States must do so at the time it stops augmentation of U.S. forces. In that case, Hanoi must not deny it.

C) Any assurances from Hanoi can reach the United States direct, or through Soviet channels, or through the Soviet and British Governments. This is for North Vietnam to decide.

Comments for Wilson:

You should be clear that the stoppage of augmentation by us would still permit the rotation of United States forces and their continued supply. Augmentation means no net increase. Stoppage of infiltration, however, means that men and arms cannot move from North Vietnam into South Vietnam.

The phraseology of paragraph A above is to prevent the sudden movement of two or three divisions across the 17th parallel during the "few days" referred to in paragraph B.

It is very important that this arrangement in Vietnam not be translated into a communist seizure of Laos. The two Co-chairmen should

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Sunflower & Sunflower Plus. Top Secret; Sunflower. Rostow forwarded a copy of this telegram to the President at 5:50 p.m. (Ibid.)

²Rostow sent the message through the British Cabinet Secretary, Burke Trend, on February 10. The message with the President's revisions is in the National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET and has no number nor time of dispatch on it.

agree between themselves that both will make a maximum effort in support of the 1954 and 1962 accords.

Assurance about infiltration ought to lead to prompt measures by the ICC, either as a Commission or as governments, to provide assurances to all concerned that these arrangements are being carried out. This should mean ICC observers in the DMZ and in whatever places in Laos may be required to keep the Ho Chi Minh trail under surveillance. Unless we receive immediate word from Hanoi that the above arrangements are in effect, it will be necessary for us to resume military action against North Viet Nam forces in and north of the Demilitarized Zone and resupply operations to those forces by land and sea. We do not expect to resume bombing against the Northern portions of North Viet Nam prior to Mr. Kosygin's departure from Britain. We are entirely serious about main proposals but see no reason why Tet should be extended, at substantial military risk, while further exchanges proceed. We still have nothing from Hanoi.

52. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, February 10, 1967, 0720Z.

17769. Ref State 133834.²

1. I believe it is necessary and prudent to inform Ky of message to Hanoi as soon as possible. We do not want to shake his confidence in our good faith. Four day truce period ends morning February 12, so at latest we should inform Ky on February 11.

2. I do not believe we should await Hanoi's response. It would be better to tell Ky what we have done and say we do not know what Hanoi's response will be.

3. In telling Ky I would propose to present our action as a logical follow-up to our previously stated position—namely that we are pre-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER. Top Secret; Immediate; Nodis; Sunflower Plus. Received at 3:26 a.m.

² After sending a message to Ho Chi Minh through channels in Moscow, the Department, in telegram 133834 to Saigon, February 9, requested Ambassador Lodge's advice on the necessity of informing Prime Minister Ky of its substance. Washington was reluctant to let Ky know of the message to Ho until there was a response from the other side; at the very least it wanted to wait until the "latest feasible moment." (Ibid.)

pared to stop the bombing in North for reciprocal action. I will find it more difficult to explain the new element introduced by our willingness to stop augmentation of U.S. forces as part of the same exchange, but will seek explain it in context of reciprocal moves. Information giving rationale re stopping augmentation would be most useful.

4. Another problem comes up in terms of extension of Tet truce. This is a stand-down of forces in their present place. If by any remote chance Hanoi agrees to meeting, GVN demands concerning location of forces will necessarily be such as to insure rejection by Hanoi. This might not be true if Tet extension is only for 7 day period, but it would surely arise if truce extension envisaged is for an indefinite period. Does the Department's statement mean to imply that we are now clearly interested in an indefinite truce, rather than the earlier formulation of "for seven days or longer"?

5. This point can be side-stepped at this time, however, since GVN has made offer and will stick to it. In explaining our message to Hanoi, we need only tell Ky that it included reference to the position taken by the GVN on truce extension.

6. Ky will probably be interested in how message was conveyed to Hanoi, whether directly or indirectly. Is there anything I can tell him in this regard?

7. Do you wish me to inform General Westmoreland at the time Ky is told? I believe it is desirable that he know what may be in the offing so that he can be prepared.

8. I await your instructions.³

Lodge

³ In telegram 135513 to Saigon, February 10, the Department concurred with Lodge's recommendation, with the instruction to emphasize to Ky that the formula involved a reciprocal exchange and that there was "no indication that Hanoi would accept this proposal." (Ibid.) In telegram 133513 to Saigon, February 10, drafted by Bundy, Lodge was told to downplay the chances for success of the initiative. However, the fact that "Kosygin has probed very hard in London" suggested "receptivity" by the other side. Ky had to be reassured that any halt to U.S. troop accretions would not undermine the military posture of South Vietnam and the allied forces there. (Ibid.) Furthermore, as directed by telegram 135675 to Saigon, February 11, Lodge was to add that the move "was dictated solely by extreme British concern and vital support" which would be jeopardized by American non-complicity. (Ibid.)

53. Notes of Telephone Conversation Between the Executive Secretary of the Department of State (Read) and Chester Cooper of the National Security Council Staff¹

Undated, 11:50 a.m.

Chet Cooper called to double talk following message:

The UK and Cooper think that Kosygin may have indicated “a bite.” He indicated to Wilson in talks this afternoon (London time) considerable interest in our Phase A–Phase B proposal and committed himself to send it in cable form to Hanoi with his endorsement. Kosygin is leaving London at 10:30 p.m. London time tonight and wants an agreed text ASAP.

Suggested text (which will be flashed to us) consists of five short lettered paragraphs.²

a. The US will stop the bombing as soon as it has been assured that infiltration by the North will stop and this assurance can be given privately.

b. Within a few days to be agreed upon by the parties, the US will stop augmenting its forces in the South and North Viet Nam will stop infiltration.

c. What the US does will of course be immediately apparent but no public rationale will be stated at the time.

d. What North Viet Nam does will be more difficult to observe but the US will not demand a public statement that they have taken the required action.

e. These assurances can be given and exchanged by the USG and the DRV directly or through the Soviets and/or British.

Ben Read

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Sunflower & Sunflower Plus. Top Secret; Sunflower Plus. The document is undated but references in the text confirm the date as February 10. Cooper was in London; Read was in Washington.

² A Flash telegram, telegram 6456 from London, February 10, 1900Z, contained these five elements slightly rephrased. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER)

54. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, February 10, 1967, 2:50 p.m.

Mr. President:

The meeting² might be broken into two parts:

- a decision on the message to London which is urgent;
- a discussion of the other issue posed in the attached memorandum.³

With respect to the first part there are two questions:

- do we permit Wilson to go ahead with his formulation?
- do we extend Tet?⁴

I suggest, therefore, that you open the meeting by asking Secretary Rusk this question: Can we proceed down this track while resuming operations at the end of Tet (6:00 P.M. our time Saturday;⁵ the last we can stop it is a message dispatched 10:00 A.M. Saturday)?

When that is settled, we can march through the other issues.

Walt

Attachment

Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Rostow) to President Johnson⁶

Washington, February 10, 1967, 2:30 p.m.

Mr. President:

Here are some of the questions we ought to answer in our own minds before we flash London, where a response is necessary by about 3:30 p.m., even though we do not have to decide all of them now or inform London now.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Sunflower Plus [2 of 2]. No classification marking.

² The President, Rusk, and McNamara met in the Cabinet Room from 3:19 to 5:12 p.m. to work out the message that would be sent to Kosygin. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary) No notes of this meeting have been found. For the message, see Document 51.

³ A handwritten notation in parentheses by Rostow reads "on its way in 5 minutes." The memorandum is printed below.

⁴ The President wrote "No" after this sentence.

⁵ February 11.

⁶ Top Secret; Sunflower.

1. How do we assure ourselves that infiltration has stopped? (The exact language of your letter to Ho⁷ is: "I am assured.")

Possible answer: We stand down our bombing in the short run when we have Ho's word backed by the UK/USSR. We do not move to the next step, however—"stop augmenting our forces"—until unilateral U.S. military surveillance and Westy's judgment tell us infiltration has, in fact, stopped. In the longer run, we shall need our own unilateral surveillance, plus third country forces, to make this guarantee stick; for example, ICC countries, third country Asians, possibly even UK/USSR.

2. How many days before we stop augmenting our forces? What relation of that interval to our "assurance" infiltration has stopped? As indicated, we do not stop augmenting our forces until Westy tells us infiltration has stopped. (FYI. It was for this reason that I wanted the letter to Ho to contain the phrase "I am assured." You have a right to say when you are assured.)

3. What is Hanoi's choice of a channel for subsequent negotiation? Or do we have, if this deal goes through, merely a more limited war inside South Vietnam?

Obviously we must try to move as fast as possible towards negotiations to end the war inside South Vietnam.

4. If we negotiate bilaterally with Hanoi, how do we engage Saigon and NLF in military/political negotiations to end the fighting within South Vietnam?

This is a question of our persuading Ky to put himself into that posture and Hanoi persuading the NLF to respond. This is extremely delicate because Ky will have to know precisely how steady we are in all this:

—how tough we are going to be on guaranteeing that infiltration has stopped before we stop augmenting our forces;

—how firm we are going to be in interpreting the Manila pledge for troop withdrawals against withdrawals of North Vietnamese forces to the North;

—above all, that we shall be firm in insisting on carrying through an orderly constitutional process on a one-man one-vote basis and in sending the NLF into the Government in Saigon.

5. What do we say when bombing stops or we do not resume bombing at the end of Tet?

We shall have to make clear that we can only hold a "cat's got our tongue" position for a relatively few days. The first explanation that bombing has stopped should be a straight military announcement by

⁷ Document 40.

our military authorities in Saigon that their evidence indicates infiltration has stopped. This would remove from Hanoi the necessity publicly to announce that infiltration has stopped.

6. Now the urgent gut question: Do we extend the Tet truce? Part of the Tet truce? The fact is we must send a cable to Westy and Ky not later than 10:00 a.m. tomorrow morning.⁸ We cannot expect a response from Hanoi to the British until the hoped for Kosygin message for a day or so at least. Unless Hanoi or the NLF get in touch with Ky very promptly, and respond to his initiative, I would recommend that we resume the war in the South but continue to hold down the bombing of the North for a few days, with this possible exception: the bombing of the supplies and forces just North of the DMZ if there are any really ominous movements. The reason for this suggestion is that it will provide some security cover for the negotiation—we could allegedly hold the planes down for weather reasons—and we ought not to let the forces in the South sit still until we are clear that a negotiation to move towards peace is envisaged between ourselves and Hanoi on the one hand, and Saigon and the NLF on the other. Whatever we decide between now and 10:00 a.m. tomorrow, we must have Wilson tell Kosygin so that there can be no misunderstanding and no claim that we “blew a chance for peace.”

7. Do we permit Lodge to inform Ky? Who else should be informed if we respond positively on this message to London? If we give Wilson the assent to put in this piece of paper, I am confident that we are duty bound to inform Ky immediately. More than that, I think it necessary to give him a quite full picture of the track we envisage. It would not be very difficult to panic the government and the Constituent Assembly, which would be true disaster. From the moment we send that message, we must treat them as partners in this difficult venture of ending the war. It is also perfectly clear that Westy must know what we are up to. As for Holt, Park, etc., we could possibly wait until we have Hanoi's response.

8. Should not the two Co-Chairmen reaffirm their support of the Geneva Accords of 1954 and 1962 and their responsibility for assuring that they will now be implemented? Should that assurance be public? Private?

Since what is envisaged here is something the two Co-Chairmen might, if they agree, send to Hanoi and Washington as an understanding, urging its acceptance, the issue of reassurance on the Geneva Accords can be separated. It is, however, our interest that publicly, or

⁸ The urgency was due to the fact that resumption of aerial bombardment was scheduled for 6 p.m. February 11; the latest that the President could counter-order the resumption would be at 10 a.m. that same day.

privately, (or both) this reaffirmation be one result of the London meeting of Kosygin and Wilson.⁹

Walt

⁹ In a memorandum to the President, February 11, 8:35 a.m., Rostow wrote: "I know it's clarified in my mind, but what I think we have now is not an A–B proposal but an A–B–C–D proposal that makes sense and which we can justify to ourselves and before the world. A. Ho informs us that infiltration has stopped. B. On the basis of his assurance, we stop bombing the North. C. We surface in Saigon as a military fact that infiltration appears to have stopped and Hanoi either:—keeps silent; or—says we never did infiltrate, we are not infiltrating now, and invites people in to see. D. When that condition has been achieved and announced, we announce that further augmentation of our forces will not take place." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Sunflower [1 of 2])

55. Telephone Conversation Between President Johnson and the President's Special Assistant (Rostow)¹

Washington, February 11, 1967, 9:15 a.m.

Rostow: Bob McNamara, sir, would like to get out by 10 o'clock an operational instruction about the area in which bombing may be resumed at the end of Tet.

President: Yes.

Rostow: May I read you his proposed message?

President: Yes, yes.

Rostow: "Prime Minister Wilson has asked that we defer resumption of military action against North Vietnamese targets until after Mr. Kosygin's departure from Britain. We've told the Prime Ministers that North Vietnam's use of the Tet cease-fire will substantially increase the volume of their re-supply activities north of the 17th parallel. We have stated we cannot defer beyond the end of the agreed upon cease-fire period attacks upon such supply activities. You are therefore authorized to resume military operations against North Vietnam at 0700 12 February from the 17th parallel as far north as the 20th parallel in accordance with previously existing instructions."

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and Rostow, February 11, 1967, 9:15 a.m., Tape F67.05, Side B, PNO 1. No classification marking. This transcript was prepared in the Office of the Historian specifically for this volume.

President: All right, now, wait a minute. The 12th—is that after he has left?

Rostow: No, sir, that's before he leaves. That would be only in the restricted area between the 17th and 20th parallels where re-supply is taking place.

President: Well, would that comply with the Prime Minister's request that we not start back bombing until Kosygin's out of London?

Rostow: No. We made clear, however, in our message yesterday,² that we would attack only in that restricted area. We told him yesterday, sir, that we are going to have to resume there.

President: All right, okay.

Rostow: Then we say we will plan to defer attacks in those portions of North Vietnam north of the 20th parallel until after Kosygin's departure from Britain.

President: And we don't set a time on his departure?

Rostow: No. We will notify you of that time.

President: Uh-huh, all right. Do we have any firm thing that he's leaving Sunday³ night?

Rostow: It's—that was the plan, and I assume he will keep to it. He's having his final session at Chequers with the Prime Minister on Sunday.

President: Anything else from the Prime Minister?

Rostow: No, only the two messages you read, sir.⁴

President: What's your evaluation of those?

Rostow: My evaluation is that the Chinese are trying to break relations with Russia and then blame a failure of Hanoi to win the war on the Russians' connivance with the U.S. The Russians are going to blame the failure in part on the breakdown of transport through China, and they will use the occasion of the Chinese madness to strengthen their position in Hanoi, if possible, as they are already doing in North Korea, in the Communist Party in Japan, and Indonesia, and he [Kosygin] is positioning himself for the world and the Communist movement. Part of his reason for talking so openly is because he's trying in the end to say, "These crazy Chinese killed the chance of Hanoi," and he's going to exploit this period of madness to try to reconsolidate Moscow control.

President: That's the future Russia, but now what about the peace that we're working on?

² See Document 51.

³ February 12.

⁴ See Document 53.

Rostow: There's not a damn thing in those messages that tells us whether it'll come now or later.

President: All right, what do you think? Are you the 85–15 boy or are you the 95–5 boy?

Rostow: Oh, I'm 85–15, sir.

President: On London and Moscow, Prime Minister and Kosygin, do you think they're going to develop anything?

Rostow: I think there's a 15 percent chance, 15 to 20, I'd say, that something will emerge in the next weeks or months.

President: Oh, yes, I agree with that. But I'm talking about between now and Sunday night.

Rostow: That I put at five.

President: Yeah.

Rostow: That depends on only one thing, sir. That depends on what's going through their head as they stare not at what's happening in London but at your letter.⁵ That letter . . . they're having to . . .

President: Well, I'd just as soon not have a damn bit of connection to London, and the better—the easier the better, because the first thing you'll have, Bobby will have arranged the thing in London. I wouldn't be a bit surprised to see that leak tomorrow—that he worked this all out with Wilson. Anybody that'd leak all this other stuff like he did—you just say this with Alsop.⁶ You better stay close with Alsop every day and tell him how ridiculous these things are without ever mentioning this fellow's name. But you better just be very objective and show him that you're carrying out the Alsop plan. And I'd sure give him the stuff on these ships, and I'd give it to him almost from the Joint Chiefs' viewpoint, not McNamara. Let him . . .

Rostow: Okay, I'll stay with Joe.

President: Yeah, go ahead and send that out.

Rostow: Yes, sir.

President: Fine.

⁵ See Document 40.

⁶ Joseph Alsop, a *Washington Post* and nationally-syndicated columnist.

56. Memorandum of Telephone Conversation¹

February 11, 1967, 9:30 a.m.

PARTICIPANTS

Chester L. Cooper
 Amb. David Bruce
 Benjamin H. Read

1. Chester Cooper advised me that the British analysis of our outgoing message of last night² was now focussing sharply on the past tense in point A ("the US will order a cessation of bombing of North Viet-Nam as soon as they are assured that infiltration from North Viet-Nam to South Viet-Nam *has* stopped"). The British have noted that this is in direct conflict with our modified Point 14 which the Secretary underscored in his press conference on Thursday which reads "we are prepared to order a cessation of all bombing of North Viet-Nam, the moment we are assured—privately or otherwise—that this step *will* be answered promptly by a corresponding and appropriate de-escalation on the other side."³

Chester Cooper and David Bruce are having considerable difficulty rationalizing the change with the British on this point, and would appreciate any argumentation we can provide. They think the Prime Minister might cable the President on this point later today although they have urged him against doing so.

2. On Point B of our message, Cooper and Bruce believe they have persuaded the British that the principal differences between our present and earlier positions are not important substantive ones, but relate largely to a most difficult public relations point on which our position is generally sympathized with.

3. *Resumption after Tet*—They inquired whether the final paragraph of our outgoing message of yesterday was in effect a decision to resume bombing in the southern portion of North Viet-Nam at 6 p.m. today (Washington time), and I have answered in the affirmative.

At the point David Bruce got on the phone and said if renewal of aerial bombing of North Viet-Nam occurs before Kosygin leaves the UK, he cannot under-emphasize the difficulty that it will cause Wilson

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER. Top Secret; Nodis; Sunflower Plus. Cooper and Bruce were in London; Read was in Washington.

² Document 51.

³ The transcript of Secretary Rusk's news conference of February 9 is in the Department of State *Bulletin*, February 27, 1967, pp. 317–322.

(and the Soviets), and he thought that it would end not only for the immediate future but for some time to come the chances of working out a settlement through these channels (British-Soviet).

BHR

57. Telephone Conversation Between President Johnson and the President's Special Assistant (Rostow)¹

Washington, February 11, 1967, 9:49 a.m.

Rostow: Mr. President, there are three things of which you should be apprised. You may want me to come up and talk about them, but I'll tick them off on the phone for you now. One—the North Vietnamese in Moscow have called our man in and said that they have transmitted the President's message to Ho Chi Minh. It was received, and a reply will be forthcoming. It doesn't say when.²

President: All right—when did this happen?

Rostow: This just arrived about 15 minutes ago.

President: All right.

Rostow: Two—David Bruce has been on the phone, and Secretary Rusk and Bob McNamara are together, David Bruce was apparently vehement in saying that if we resume bombing even in the southern part of North Vietnam, it's his judgment that we will remove the possibility of Kosygin's being helpful for some time to come.³ That's—I have not talked to David, but Bob and Secretary Rusk are talking about that.

President: Well, now wait a minute—until he leaves, you mean?

Rostow: That's right.

President: Well, he's not talking beyond the time he leaves, is he?

Rostow: No, sir.

President: He's just saying that we shouldn't do any bombing until Kosygin gets out.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and Rostow, February 11, 1967, 9:49 a.m., Tape F67.05, Side B, PNO 2. No classification marking. This transcript was prepared in the Office of the Historian specifically for this volume.

² Thompson reported this exchange in telegram 3451 from Moscow, February 11. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER)

³ See Document 56.

Rostow: That is correct sir. I told him to get back with you when they talk about this. Time is short because the message should go out about 10 o'clock.

President: Why is it—he's not afraid of getting hit in London, is he?

Rostow: That's exactly what I thought [laughing]—I don't—see, well I can't—I didn't hear David, and I just don't know how solid this is or why. But I just wanted to report that I was informed of this conversation and I wanted to inform you that . . .

President: All right. Who informed you of it?

Rostow: Ben Read informed me of the conversation. And that's the second one. The third thing which Ben Read told me about is that they're having great trouble in London with the tense of our informing, you know—"has stopped" versus "will stop." And I pointed out to him two things. One—they say it runs contrary to our statement by the Secretary of State that we would act on the future tense. I pointed out to him two things. One—that the deal we're now talking about is different from any we have ever talked about before. It involves as part of the package the cutting down of augmentation. So it is in diplomatic terms a new situation. The second thing I pointed out to him is that we cannot be put in a position of negotiating about this language with intermediaries; that it would be one thing if we were confronted with Hanoi saying, "Gee this language is difficult for us." It's quite a different thing for us to have our position cut back by some intermediaries. In any case, Secretary Rusk and Bob are [convinced] of that point—that the boys in London who are playing around with this thing are playing around with the tense of our language.

President: Now who is that? Is that Kosygin doing that, or is that . . .

Rostow: No, I think it's Cooper and Bruce and the British and Soldatov,⁴ who's left behind and is part of Kosygin's party. I just wanted to give you a situation report, sir, so you know what's going on. I don't want you to get all behind us in all this, and I've got no recommendations—if I had to make them, I'd make them. But I think the first thing to do is for you to know what's going on. Those three things you should know.

President: All right, what are you—what would be your recommendations?

Rostow: Uhh . . . I think we can hold the bombing until Kosygin goes, one. Two—I would not change one letter of what we have now said until we hear directly and are dealing directly with Hanoi.

⁴ Alexandr Soldatov, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister.

President: I agree with that. I agree with both of them.

Rostow: That's my feeling about it.

President: Are they going to want a meeting?

Rostow: I shall find out. I shall talk directly now to Secretary Rusk, but I didn't want to leave you a little behind, sir.⁵

President: Fine.

Rostow: Thank you.

⁵ In a telephone call to the President at 10:08 a.m., Rostow reported that McNamara would "hold his message" and that a meeting would be set up for noon. (Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and Rostow, February 11, 1967, 10:08 a.m., Tape F67.05, Side B, PNO 3) The President met with Rostow, Rusk, McNamara, Bundy, and Katzenbach from 12:23 p.m. through 2:26 p.m. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary) No record of the meeting has been found.

58. Memorandum From Secretary of State Rusk to President Johnson¹

Washington, February 11, 1967.

SUBJECT

Resumption of Operations Against North Viet-Nam Over the Next Two Days

As you know, the British have put our proposal to Kosygin² and he has transmitted it to Hanoi.³ Kosygin returns to London tomorrow

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET. Top Secret. Drafted by Bundy.

² See Document 51.

³ According to a message from Wilson to the President, the text of which is contained in telegram 135606 to London and Moscow, February 11, as a result of the meeting Kosygin "promised to consult Hanoi urgently," and would let Wilson know of any response by the date of their next meeting on February 12. Wilson related that he told Kosygin that the other side could accept either Wilson's own formulation of President Johnson's earlier Phase A–Phase B formula or the two-part proposal itself, both of which allowed for Hanoi's fulfillment of the offer through secret assurances. In addition, Wilson related his rejection of Kosygin's request to join him in a communiqué calling on Washington unilaterally to halt the bombing. Last, he was unsuccessful in gaining Soviet acceptance of the reinstitution of the mechanisms of the Geneva conferences to resolve the current situation. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER) Telegram 135615 to London and Moscow, February 11, reported that Wilson underscored the Soviet leader's eager interest in the matter, which Wilson believed derived from the fact that "Kosygin is obsessional about the Chinese problem." (Ibid.)

and his final meeting with Wilson will take place between 5 p.m. and midnight British time (noon and 7 p.m. our time) tomorrow. This carries the meeting into early morning of Monday Saigon time, and Kosygin leaves London on Monday morning British time (late Monday night Saigon time).

Ambassador Bruce has now telephoned me to report that he was called down this morning and given a message on behalf of Wilson asking in the most urgent terms that we not resume operations against North Viet-Nam before the end of the Kosygin talks. On the basis of this approach, Bruce has given me his own extremely strong judgment that if we should resume operations against North Viet-Nam tonight, it would mean that the Soviets would refuse to discuss the matter seriously tomorrow, there would be a break-up on the issue, and the break-up would be blamed wholly on our action.⁴

As you know, yesterday's decision was to resume bombing and naval operations up to the 20th Parallel.⁵ We also had a B-52 strike in the northern part of the DMZ (technically North Vietnamese territory), but this has now been canceled for operational reasons. There are other B-52 operations wholly confined to the South, and all of us agree that these do not raise the same issue. The South Vietnamese have announced they are going back into action in the South tomorrow, and we are over that hurdle as far as Southern operations are concerned.

The major argument for resuming bombing and naval operations is, of course, the overwhelming evidence of large North Vietnamese movements, particularly by sea, down to the southern part of North Viet-Nam. This morning's reports indicate that this has tapered off somewhat, and it may well be that the North Vietnamese have made their plans on the assumption that we will resume action tonight, so that the flow would at least be sharply reduced from what we have seen during the last four days. Nonetheless, failure to take bombing and naval action could lead to significant further re-supply.

On the other hand, I myself believe that Ambassador Bruce's judgment is correct, and that if we resume action tonight we shall inevitably

⁴ Bruce later reported on this morning meeting with Wilson, Brown, and Trend in telegram 6495 from London, February 11. In this "stormy" meeting with Bruce and Cooper, the British leaders expressed concern about U.S. reticence to acquiesce to their formulation. Given that it had been based upon the February 7 message to Kosygin and the last of the Fourteen Points, and the fact that the Johnson administration had "raised no objection" to their idea, the British assumed U.S. support in their endeavor. However, according to Bruce, "they now feel that the ground has shifted from under them." (Ibid., POL 27-14 VIET) As a result of that meeting, Bruce predicted that an end to the bombing halt "would really cook the whole goose." (Memoranda of telephone conversations between Rusk and Bruce, February 11, 10:12 and 10:13 a.m.; *ibid.*, POL 27-14 VIET)

⁵ See Document 54.

be charged with having broken up a major possibility of peace. In the light of the charges that still surround our December actions, the volume of criticism would, I believe, be extremely heavy. In fact, it would be taken as confirmation of the December charges, and would multiply the effect of those charges very greatly.

This is not a question of how the British or Soviets behave. As a practical matter, either might well leak the situation to our disadvantage. But the basic fact that Viet-Nam has entered into the Kosygin discussions is a matter of common knowledge, so that the damage would exist in any case, and would only be somewhat increased by what the British or Soviets might make known.

I have specifically asked Bruce whether his judgment would apply to naval operations, and his categorical answer to me is that it would. I think this too is correct.

In addition to the argument of charges against us, I believe we must reckon that there remains an outside chance that Kosygin will get some reply from Hanoi. I myself doubt very much whether Hanoi will accept the proposal we have made, but, if they came back and played with it, it would be a major break in Hanoi's position and could well lead to something really serious. Thus, if we accept the judgment that resumption of action tonight would prevent Kosygin from dealing tomorrow, we could be losing a serious, though small, chance of progress.

Finally, I believe resumption of our actions could do really significant harm to our relations both with the British and the Soviets. Unlike the December case with the Poles, we are dealing with two key and generally responsible nations.

Although tonight is the critical time from the standpoint of Kosygin's actions tomorrow, I believe we must reckon that we will not be able to assess whatever Kosygin produces in time to make any useful judgment before the military day begins on Monday. Moreover, to resume while Kosygin is still in London has virtually all the drawbacks that action tonight would have.

If you decide not to resume for the next two days, it will be necessary to inform Ky promptly, with the reasons. He is not too happy about our proposal, and will probably not like our failure to resume for these two days. However, I do not think there will be any serious damage to our relations.

Dean Rusk⁶

⁶ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

59. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom¹

Washington, February 11, 1967, 2:08 p.m.

135627. 1. This responds to your telecons relaying message from Wilson about resumption of bombing.²

2. As you know, we did not want to make any commitments to extend the Tet bombing stand-down. You also know that our basic position remains not to stop bombing in return for mere willingness to talk.

3. However, we have great respect for your opinion and accept your recommendation not to conduct military actions against the North until Kosygin leaves. It must be absolutely clear to Wilson that we would then go ahead and that we will not consider a further deferral.

4. Wilson should not refer to resumption of bombing on his own initiative. If Kosygin asks about it, we suggest that Wilson reply that he is not familiar with details of allied military plans but that US attitude on this point has been made clear.

5. Wilson should be left in no doubt that we cannot prolong suspension of bombing in absence of firm word on infiltration. He should also know that when we say "stop infiltration" we mean "stop infiltration." We cannot trade a horse for a rabbit and will react to bad faith on this point. We are losing lives today because such commitments in Laos Accords of 1962³ were treated with contempt by Hanoi and Co-Chairmen and ICC could do nothing about it

6. About Wilson trip to Hanoi, we see little point in it. We thought two Co-Chairmen had concluded that best prospects lie in bilateral contact between US and Hanoi. Further, we could not become involved in a visit which would raise problem of another unrequited suspension of bombing.

7. Wilson is of course already aware that the South Vietnamese and we are resuming operations in the South tomorrow (112300 Zulu) and that we have been carrying on bombing operations in Laos throughout.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER. Top Secret; Flash; Nodis; Sunflower Plus. Drafted by Bundy, cleared by Read, and approved by Rusk. Repeated to Moscow.

² Documents 53 and 56.

³ For text of the Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos and a 20-article Protocol, signed on July 23, 1962, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1962*, pp. 1075–1083. For documentation on the negotiation of the accord, see *Foreign Relations, 1961–1963*, volume XXIV.

8. Septel will contain our comments on the question of tenses in our proposal.⁴

Rusk

⁴ Document 60.

60. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom¹

Washington, February 11, 1967, 4:46 p.m.

135662. For Ambassador and Cooper Only.

1. This responds to your report of British concern about our insistence that draft specify that infiltration “has stopped.” We gather they are pointing to apparent inconsistency between this position and the future tense employed in the revised point 14 released here Thursday.²

2. You should give them the following:

a. As previous message made clear, we face immediate specific problem of possible three divisions poised just north of DMZ. We must be in position to insist that these cannot be moved into SVN just before their undertaking takes effect.

b. We recognize that revised point 14 spoke in future tense, but that formulation related to a different proposal, i.e., bombing cessation alone on our side, not bombing cessation plus troop augmentation which of course are two major commitments on our part.

c. British should be aware (as we realize State 133834³ did not make clear) that message conveyed to Hanoi was in same terms as final corrected draft, i.e., that we must be assured that infiltration has stopped. In the last 24 hours, we have information that Soviets are aware of contents of this message, presumably through their Hanoi contacts, so that change in tense in final draft given to Soviets did not come as surprise to Soviets or Hanoi and cannot have impaired British credibility.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER. Top Secret; Immediate; Nodis; Sunflower Plus. Drafted and approved by Bundy and cleared by Walt Rostow in substance and by Read.

² February 9.

³ See footnote 2, Document 52.

d. In any event, our position on this point remains firm because of the special problem posed by the divisions north of the DMZ. We very much doubt whether Soviets or Hanoi will reject proposal for this reason. If they should come back on it, we would of course wish to be informed.

Rusk

61. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam¹

Washington, February 11, 1967, 5:15 p.m.

135676. Eyes Only Ambassadors.

1. Saigon, Bangkok and Vientiane are receiving military message directing that bombing and naval operations against North Viet-Nam not be resumed until after Kosygin leaves London. This decision has been taken in order to avoid any possibility of charges that resumption impaired talks Kosygin having with British. It constitutes a one-shot exception to our standing policy, because of unique circumstances in this particular situation arising from fact that bombing had already been suspended for four days. Our policy on not stopping bombing in return for talks remains unchanged.

2. Saigon should inform GVN of this decision. We leave it to Bangkok and Vientiane whether they think some notification would be desirable. We expect public statement here Monday, after bombing resumed, explaining that short additional suspension period was undertaken because of previous four days and because resumption while Kosygin was still in London might be misconstrued.

3. For press purposes, Lodge or Zorthian should consult with Westmoreland. Our objective is to damp down speculation as fully as possible until we can make announcement here after resumption Monday evening your time.² For this purpose, we here will be responding that matter is operational, that any speculation is unwarranted, and that we will have normal press briefings Monday. Precise guidance has gone through military channels instructing your spokesman to

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Immediate. Drafted and approved by Bundy and cleared by Read. Repeated to Bangkok, Vientiane, Canberra, Wellington, Seoul, Manila, and London. A handwritten notation indicates that the President saw and approved the telegram.

² February 13.

make no comment on military operations to the North. We recognize there may be speculative stories that we cannot prevent, but we wish at all costs not to feed these with anything authoritative.

4. Canberra, Wellington, Seoul and Manila may in their discretion arrange unobtrusive contacts at appropriately high levels to convey what we are doing, stressing confidence.

5. London should be sure British understand press line we are following.

Rusk

62. Memorandum From the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Wheeler) to Secretary of Defense McNamara¹

CM-2111-67

Washington, February 11, 1967.

SUBJECT

Resumption of Offensive Operations against North Vietnam

1. I have been reflecting upon our conversation this afternoon² during which you informed me of the considerations leading to a decision not to resume offensive operations against North Vietnam upon the termination of the Tet truce pending the departure of Mr. Kosygin from the United Kingdom. During the discussion, I expressed to you my serious reservations as to this decision based upon the potential danger incurred by our forces in Vietnam. Moreover, I am gravely concerned that the Soviets and the British may conduct affairs in such a way as to obstruct our resumption of offensive operations against North Vietnam subsequent to the departure of Mr. Kosygin from the United Kingdom. A further factor which bothers me is that, in effect, we have subverted the U.S. Government policy that we will not suspend our air campaign against North Vietnam in return for a promise to engage in talks; indeed, we have gone further than this, because we have delayed the resumption of our offensive operations against North Vietnam in return for a half-promise to propose to the Hanoi leadership that they should engage in talks with the U.S. Government.

¹ Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, McNamara Vietnam Files: FRC 77-0075, Box 1 (January and February 1967). Top Secret. A handwritten notation indicates that the President saw the memorandum that evening.

² No other record of the conversation has been found.

2. While I fully recognize the domestic and foreign pressures upon the President, I wish to bring to your attention and to that of the President my own feelings in this matter. They are these:

a. Prime Minister Wilson is operating basically from a narrow objective of obtaining importance and prestige in the British domestic political scene; i.e., his "peace-making" efforts are pointed primarily at maintaining ascendancy over his political opponents within and without his own party.

b. Britain is regrettably no longer a first-class power. The place of Britain in the international scene depends today in great measure upon its relationship with the United States. If the British can play a major, publicized role in terminating the war in Vietnam, it will further British desire to continue to be a leading power on the world stage.

c. British objectives and those of the United States as regards the War in Vietnam are not the same.

d. Prime Minister Wilson and the British Government will not have to bear the onus of losses inflicted upon our forces as a result of the unimpeded buildup of North Vietnamese forces and logistic means contiguous to the frontiers of South Vietnam.

3. In summation of the foregoing, I wish to register my belief that there is danger that the Soviets and the British for their own reasons, not necessarily the same, will attempt to delay, obstruct and obfuscate the resumption of our offensive operations against North Vietnam. Such attempts should be rejected out of hand. Promptly upon the departure of Mr. Kosygin from the United Kingdom, we should resume our offensive operations, both air and naval, against North Vietnam. In fact, barring a positive and affirmative response from the North Vietnamese Government to proposals made to it through other channels by the United States Government, I recommend that we should expand our air and naval operations. Specifically, the President should now authorize the following actions:

a. Employment of naval gunfire against appropriate ground targets in North Vietnam south of 19° north latitude.

b. Immediate attack against the electric power system, the Thai Nguyen steel plant and the Haiphong cement plant.

4. Because of the timing of events central to the situation we find ourselves in, I have not been able to consult with other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as to the foregoing recommendations. However, I know that they would concur with me in making these recommendations to the President and to you.

5. I request that my views be presented to the President either by means of this memorandum or by personal interview.

Earle G. Wheeler

63. Memorandum for the Record¹

London, February 11, 1967.

This is an attempt to reconstruct the content and mood of the meeting last night at Downing Street.

Ambassador Bruce and I arrived at Downing Street at about 11:15 p.m. with two messages from Washington.² The first (which had been transmitted by telephone to Trend earlier) indicated that the bombing pause would continue through Kosygin's visit. The second, which we had just received and had not yet communicated to Downing Street, dealt with an explanation of the change in the formulation of our Pause [Phase] A Pause [Phase] B formula which had been delivered the previous night to Downing Street for transmission to Kosygin.

Present in the Cabinet Room were the Prime Minister, George Brown, Burke Trend, Don Murray and Michael Halls. The atmosphere was tense, and when the British read the message explaining the shift in tenses, it became even more so. Wilson said he could only conclude that Washington did not know what it was doing from one day to the next, or that Washington knew what it was doing but did not wish to keep the British informed, or that Washington was consciously trying to lead him up the garden path by tightening its negotiations posture while letting the British proceed on the basis of an assumption that Washington was in fact ready to reach a settlement.

Wilson in short felt that he had been made a fool of by Washington and that his credibility (which he had built up with great effort over the last 20 years) was now badly damaged. It is my recollection, but I am not absolutely certain of this, that Wilson said that he was "betrayed" by Washington.

Wilson implied that if he could not reach an agreement with Kosygin at Chequers on Sunday³ it would largely be the fault of the United States because of its shifting position. He indicated that he might be forced at some point to say this publicly. In any case, he felt he would have to take a much more "independent" position with respect to Vietnam and that US/UK relations on the Vietnam issue could never be the same.

Wilson with Brown's agreement felt that at Chequers on Sunday he would have to stick by his original text of the Phase A Phase B for-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER. Top Secret; Nodis; Sunflower. Drafted by Cooper on February 12.

² See Documents 51 and 60.

³ February 12.

mula (that is the one he had handed Kosygin at the Soviet reception on Friday night)⁴ and indicated that he would try to bring the Americans along with it, if in fact the Russians and the North Vietnamese were ready to commit themselves to proceed on the basis of the Wilson wording. Wilson and Brown were relieved by American assurances that there would be no bombing of North Vietnam while Kosygin was in England. They were, however, very concerned about the implications domestically and in connection with their continuing relationships with Kosygin on Vietnam if bombing resumed immediately after Kosygin's departure. Wilson implied that he might have to "dissociate" himself from the resumption of bombing (Brown indicated he would not go along with "dissociation").

Wilson said that he could not allow Chequers to end without at least some agreement in a communiqué that the British and the Russians would continue to remain in contact with respect to Vietnam. He hoped that if nothing else, the President would endorse the communiqué. He also indicated he might have to fly to Washington (and here he made a point of saying he would take Brown with him) to discuss Vietnam with the President.

During most of the discussion, Brown remained restive, interrupting now and again with rather pompous and not necessarily relevant remarks. He did a considerable amount of posturing and in essence contributed very little to the discussion. He did say, for whatever it was worth, that he had been put upon for the last time, and he hoped Washington realized he had been 200% behind us and that in fact he would have taken a much stronger and tougher line with Kosygin than the Prime Minister. He suggested we tell Washington this. (The Ambassador and I indicated that any differences in approach between Wilson and Brown were not something we would want to send to Washington. The Prime Minister was in obvious agreement with this.)

Cooper made three basic points:

(1) If the North Vietnamese or Russians had been interested in the Phase A Phase B formula as a basic proposal, they probably would have agreed to it by now. If in the past few days they wanted to proceed on the basis of this formula, it was hard to believe that the difference in tense would make the difference between their acceptance and rejection. In short, the British should not exaggerate the substantive differences between the two positions, although they might be annoyed at the apparent change in the American position over the last few days.

⁴ See Document 58.

(2) In the discussions with Kosygin the Prime Minister could well point out that the Russians had been warned twice about the implications of North Vietnamese misbehaviour during the truce—at the very outset of the talks, and later in the week when it was clear a build-up was going on north of the DMZ.

(3) Wilson could also note that Kosygin's friends were difficult, and that the British had some problems with their friends. The job of the two co-chairmen was not to dwell on these matters, but to try to bridge the differences between the two sides.

Ambassador Bruce reminded Wilson that he was in the process of a negotiation and that both he and Kosygin would obviously be tabling propositions that would require a considerable amount of give and take, not only between themselves but between the two sides they were representing. It would be overly optimistic and utterly unrealistic to think that the Russians or the North Vietnamese would be likely to agree immediately to any British or American proposals.

The Ambassador also pointed out that a distinction should be made between the British irritability with what they believed to be American caprice or folly, and the important substantive problems they would confront at Chequers. The former matter could be dealt with in due course, but the immediate question was how to proceed substantively. The Ambassador pointed out that the British should feel perfectly free to use their own text as a basis for their negotiating stand, and that we were in no position to dictate or master-mind their discussions. Ambassador Bruce also emphasized his personal feeling that it would not be wise for the Prime Minister to dash off to Washington immediately after the session with Kosygin since it would appear to be an act of panic and hysteria. Finally, the Ambassador emphasized that the communiqué should stress the need for a continuing contact and association with Vietnam by the two co-chairmen.

Chester Cooper⁵

⁵ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

64. Telegram From Prime Minister Wilson to President Johnson¹

London, February 12, 1967, 0240Z.

T.30/67. You will realise what a hell of a situation I am in for my last day of talks with Kosygin. My immediately following telegram sets out what seems to have happened over the past week as I understand it but I want to concentrate here on the immediate way ahead. I have to re-establish trust because not only will he have doubts about my credibility but he will have lost credibility in Hanoi and possibly among his colleagues.

I propose to be pretty frank with him and to tell him that the present situation arises in my view from the deep American concern about intensive North Vietnamese movements during the Tet period. I shall say that I warned him at the beginning of the week that there should not be provocative DRV movements during Tet and remind him that on Friday at lunch on the basis of a message from you people I told him that certain movements in the first two days of Tet had been on a shocking scale.

Nevertheless, I think he will feel, because his own position has been weakened, that we cannot make any definitive progress towards a settlement in the next few days. I have got to get him into as relaxed a posture as possible and tell him that his position and mine must be not to concern ourselves with military activities but to concentrate on the longer term political situation.

On the vitally important question of whether as I have told him a cessation of bombing depends on a prior secret assurance by Hanoi that infiltration will stop² or as now seems to be the case from your recent messages, will only take place after infiltration has stopped³ on this question I face very great difficulties. You must realise that at lunchtime on Friday he suddenly bit hard on what I said to him, namely that all that was required was a private assurance that infiltration would stop. He bit on this because he clearly knew as I did not, that your message to Hanoi was the tougher version which required a prior stopping of infiltration before bombing could cease. He thought I was telling him something new. I thought I was merely repeating what I had told him earlier with as I thought your authority.

As soon as I repeated this offer, he asked for it in writing, and he said he would transmit it at once to Moscow for Hanoi. In the evening he told me he had reported this to Brezhnev who had supported his

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Sunflower & Sunflower Plus. Secret; Eyes Only. Received at the White House at 3:07 a.m.

² Rostow underlined the preceding phrase and wrote in the margin: "never when."

³ Next to this word Rostow wrote: "time."

action. At that moment peace looked like being within our grasp. I think this was David's view at that time.

I can only now get out of this position if I say to him either that I am not in your confidence or that there was a sudden and completely unforeseeable change in Washington which as a loyal satellite I must follow. I cannot say either. George and I have discussed this dilemma for some three hours with Chet and David. My decision as to how to proceed is of course mine and not theirs, but I have fully taken into account all they have said.

I am standing by, as I must, the document which I handed to Kosygin at 7:00 p.m. GMT on Friday⁴ before I received Rostow's message for transmission to Kosygin. Both Kosygin and I know that as of today we cannot accept this.

The only thing I can do is to say to Kosygin if he will go along with this one and press it on Hanoi, I will similarly press it on you. In this I am slightly encouraged, if that is a word I can use on a day like this, by the last sentence of Rusk's telegram⁵ which David has shown me this evening.

If I do get Kosygin to agree, then I must press our line on you and if it is impossible for you to accept, we shall have to reason together about the situation which will then arise.

More generally it will be my attempt to get Kosygin into a position where he and I accept joint responsibility for trying to assist the parties concerned in the fighting to reach agreement. This is going to be very difficult particularly when bombing restarts. I shall not of course say anything to Kosygin about bombing or any other military question. But all week he has asserted a position very different from his previous posture. He no longer says this question has nothing to do with him, but is a matter for Hanoi. He now says he and I must do all we can to get a settlement. I want to nail him to this position despite his disappointment that nothing happened during Tet. I have thought since November that he chose the date of this week to coincide with Tet and he will be bitterly disappointed as indeed am I.

I do not know whether I can nail him to this in the communiqué. I hope I can. But he and I have got to move to a slightly more central position, each of us loyal to our respective allies but each slightly more capable of taking a detached view which if they and if we could agree we will then press on our respective friends. He agreed with an analogy I used earlier in the week that in one sense he and I were lawyers representing our respective clients, and that because they were at war

⁴ February 10; see Document 60.

⁵ Document 51. The last sentence of Rusk's telegram was added by President Johnson as a revision to the original message.

they could hardly be expected to come together and that we must try to get a settlement out of court ad referendum to the two clients. I must now nail him down to a continuing acceptance of this position.

I assure you our fees will be low, and I am only too conscious of the infinitely heavier price you are paying in this matter.

I am conscious how much depends on the five hours or so I shall have with Kosygin at Chequers on Sunday evening. You should know that Chet Cooper will be in close proximity but no-one will know that. All necessary arrangements have been made for teleprinter and if necessary telephone communication to the White House whether for use by me or by Chet who will of course be in touch with David.

If I can get him to accept a continuing responsibility in these matters that is probably the best I can hope for. There could I suppose be a dramatic change on his side though this is unlikely. If it is, we must be ready to react.

But if I do nail him down to a continuing responsibility, it would be very helpful if, for example, after the communiqué, you were able to make some public reference to the value of a continuing joint effort by him and me.

Perhaps you and I are so close to this problem now—and of course most of the difficulties have arisen on an issue which must remain secret—that it is difficult for us to realise the impact which bombing resumption must make. But also on opinion in our two countries, particularly on Kosygin whom I certainly cannot warn in advance. I think I can handle the political opinion and party pressures in Britain though this is becoming increasingly difficult.

But in view of the clear breakdown in communication and understanding which has occurred this week, and the need for the fullest understanding in the future, we ought to meet very soon.

65. Telegram From Prime Minister Wilson to President Johnson¹

London, February 12, 1967, 1505Z.

T. 31/67. This is a background telegram about the reasons for our present difficulties which you may or may not wish to study and in any case I think that David or Chet may be filling in the detail.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Sunflower & Sunflower Plus. Top Secret; Eyes Only. Received at the White House at 3:17 a.m.

The main difficulty is this. On Tuesday² I outlined to Kosygin the basic American position based on paragraph 14 of Dean Rusk's detailed letter to George Brown before George's Moscow visit. It was given more specific content by the briefing I received just before Kosygin's arrival from Chet Cooper whom you had sent in response to my appeal.³ I was further reinforced in this by the relevant paragraph of your telegram no CAP 67038.⁴

I did not at that time know that the message you were sending to Hanoi was in a different and tougher form and in terms of the sequence of timing was different from the Rusk/Brown exchanges of November,⁵ different from the more detailed Cooper briefing and indeed appears to be inconsistent with your 14th Point.⁶

Kosygin was interested and he told me he had been in touch with Ho Chi Minh between the end of the formal meetings and my dinner with him that evening.

I was surprised on Friday⁷ when I went over this ground again with him that he was highly excited by my formulation which only repeated my Tuesday statement.⁸ Obviously the reason for this as I can now appreciate was that Hanoi had told him what they had heard from Washington and my account of Friday naturally seemed to be more acceptable to them. This is why he asked me to put it in writing and why he told me he was transmitting it forthwith. You can imagine the shock he must have had on boarding his train for Scotland when he got Rostow's message late on Friday night British time.⁹

You will forgive me if I say what I cannot understand is this. My statement to him on Tuesday originally oral but followed up by a written repetition, was communicated at once to Washington. It is now clear to me that it differed from the Washington/Hanoi message referred to

² February 7.

³ See footnote 1, Document 39.

⁴ See footnote 5, Document 39.

⁵ See Document 15.

⁶ This point of the Fourteen Points statement of January 3, 1966 (released separately on January 7 of that year under the heading "United States Official Position on Viet-Nam") reads: "We have said publicly and privately that we could stop the bombing of North Viet Nam as a step toward peace although there has not been the slightest hint or suggestion from the other side as to what they would do if the bombing was stopped." For full text, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1966*, pp. 740–742. Rusk elaborated on the points in a January 27, 1967, statement with the following stipulations: "We are prepared to order a cessation of all bombing of North Vietnam, the moment we are assured—privately or otherwise—that this step will be answered promptly by a corresponding and appropriate deescalation of the other side." See *ibid.*, 1967, pp. 856–858.

⁷ February 10.

⁸ See the Attachment to Document 41.

⁹ Document 51.

in your telegram under reference. If my message was going to be repudiated, as indeed it was on Friday night by Rostow's telegram, I cannot understand why I was not told earlier. Kosygin will find it even more difficult to understand.

You will I am sure appreciate Kosygin's position as I understand it. For a long time he has been trying to put pressure on Hanoi and there have been undoubtedly those there who did not want any truck with a peaceful settlement. He climbed out on a limb trusting in my confident assertion of where you stood. Now his enemies in Hanoi and perhaps in Moscow will be saying he was wrong to be misled by me.

I hope I can quickly reestablish trust with Kosygin. As you know, I have known these Russians for 20 years and this week I have been trying to cash the cheque I have painfully built up over this time. I hope past credit will stand me in good stead tomorrow. Above all I am passionately keen to get him associated with me for the future in the political operation we all know is necessary.

I know you understand my difficulties. I see little purpose in an inquest into the events of the past week. We must look to the future. And I feel the sooner we can meet the better, provided that the meeting is related to the continuing Anglo Russian responsibility for a political settlement and does not seem to be merely in response to any military developments in these next few days.

66. Telegram From President Johnson to Prime Minister Wilson¹

Washington, February 12, 1967, 3:36 a.m.

CAP 67043. I have carefully read and considered your two messages bearing on your talks later today with Kosygin.²

I would wish to leave these thoughts with you on the present position.

I really do not believe that the matter hangs on the tense of verbs. Moscow had from George Brown in November the Phase A–Phase B formulation. Hanoi also had it from the Poles. Hanoi has shown no flicker of interest for more than two months. Meanwhile their build-

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Sunflower & Sunflower Plus. Top Secret. Repeated to London "literally eyes only" for Bruce and Cooper as telegram 135718, February 12. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER)

² Documents 64 and 65.

up continues and they have used 3 periods of no bombing (Christmas, New Year's and Tet) for large scale movement and preparation of their forces for further military action.

I want to emphasize that we have had nothing yet from Hanoi. They receive our messages—but thus far it has been a one-way conversation. Many intermediaries have attempted, from time to time, to negotiate with us. Everyone seems to wish to negotiate except Hanoi. I wish someone would produce a real live North Vietnamese prepared to talk.

Understandably your present preoccupation is Kosygin's attitude. But thus far, Kosygin has not transmitted one word from Hanoi except to endorse their Foreign Minister's interview with Burchett in his own press conference.

From an operational point of view, we can not stop the bombing while three (possibly four) divisions dash south from the DMZ before *their* promise is to take effect. I hope you will see the importance of this for the men out there who are doing the fighting.

We do not accept the view that our statement to you of our position on February 7³ is inconsistent with either our message to Hanoi⁴ or our formula for you and Kosygin of February 10.⁵ We asked on February 7 for an "assured stoppage" of infiltration. In your version of an A-B formula it was transmuted to an assurance that infiltration "will stop." This, in our view, is a quite different matter. We so recognized promptly on receipt of your formula and telephoned Burke Trend that we were drafting and would transmit our response shortly.

The problem of substance is that no formula can be satisfactory to us—and perhaps to Hanoi—unless there is clarity about two matters:

—The timing of a cessation of bombing, cessation of infiltration, and no further augmentation of forces.

—How assurance in the matter of infiltration will be established. You have correctly pointed out that the cessation of bombing and the stoppage of augmentation by us will necessarily be public.

I would not expect Kosygin to come in at Chequers with anything firm and definitive by way of a positive response. In that case we can take stock and see where we go from here on the diplomatic track. If he does respond positively and constructively, we can then proceed to the clarifications that both sides will surely require.

Hanoi has received our messages and has just today informed us that a direct response to us from Hanoi will be forthcoming. We sup-

³ See footnote 5, Document 39.

⁴ See Document 40.

⁵ See Document 51.

pose that we shall not hear from them until your talks are concluded. There is importance, then, in our staying together. We must not let them play one position off against another.

Let me add that I much appreciate your dedicated effort during this week—and will, of course, express publicly our thanks. I'm always glad to know that you are in my corner but I would have some difficulty, in view of my responsibilities and problems here, in giving anyone a power of attorney. I hope for peace more than you can possibly know and will be much interested in what happens at Chequers.

67. Telegram From Prime Minister Wilson to President Johnson¹

London, February 12, 1967, 1450Z.

T. 33/67. Thank you for your message CAP 67043² which I have carefully studied.

I fully take your point about the grave danger that if there were an interval between the cessation of bombing and the stoppage of infiltration, Hanoi might rush three or four divisions through the DMZ into South Vietnam before their promised stoppage of infiltration took effect. This I agree could happen even if the interval between Phase A and Phase B were only two or three days.

I have been turning over in my mind an alternative way of securing the required guarantee, namely that the prior two-way assurance should contain a timetable if possible underwritten by or communicated through the Russians. What might be provided is that you would agree in advance to stop the bombing in return for their prior assurance that they would stop the infiltration, say six hours afterwards, or an even shorter timetable if that was considered necessary. I'm not asking you to comment on this at this stage but if the conditions are right tonight I might see what mileage I can get out of it with Kosygin. It would of course be aired as a possible idea without committing you in any way. Indeed I would make it clear I have not attempted to ascertain your views on it. I'll let you know of course how things go.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Sunflower & Sunflower Plus. Secret. Received at the White House at 9:54 a.m. Also sent to London as telegram 135731. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 27-14 VIET/SUNFLOWER)

² Document 66.

By the way. You misunderstood me I think about a power of attorney. Clearly that would be out of the question. That was not my phrase. The key words were ad referendum, repeat ad referendum.

We will keep you informed on how things go this evening.

68. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in the Soviet Union¹

Washington, February 12, 1967, 1:16 p.m.

135734. For Monday morning delivery to Ambassador unless instructed otherwise by septel.

1. We now assume that Kosygin will leave London tomorrow and that you may be called on for follow-up dealings with Soviets. For this purpose, we are giving you additional background info on dealings in London, as they stand prior to final Kosygin/Wilson meeting ending tonight at midnight London time. We expect to give you best possible summary of that discussion by later telegram.

2. First, you should know that we have in fact held off on resumption of bombing and naval action against the North until Kosygin leaves London. We expect resumption to follow promptly thereafter, and to make frank statement here that additional short suspension period was because we were already suspended during Tet and because active resumption in these peculiar circumstances might have been misconstrued in relation to Kosygin visit. We expect to make clear on background that this represents no change in our basic policy of not stopping bombing for mere willingness to talk or even actual talks among third parties. British are fully informed of our decision (for which they had of course pressed) but we have told Wilson not to reveal it explicitly to Soviets, who we are sure will fully understand what we are doing and also why we are not giving them a message on it or announcing it publicly until after it has taken place.

3. State of play in London is that British on Feb. 7 gave Kosygin as their own draft a summary of the proposal contained in the President's letter to Ho.² However, unlike that letter, the British draft of that date clearly separated the stopping of the bombing from the actual

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER. Top Secret; Immediate; Nodis; Sunflower Plus. Drafted and approved by Bundy.

² See Document 40.

stopping of infiltration, although it required assurance of the latter before the former would be done. This differs from the President's letter to Ho, which of course spoke of assurance that infiltration had stopped already.

4. This difference has since caused difficulty with the British. On Feb. 10, Wilson repeated the substance of the British Feb. 7 version to Kosygin, who expressed real interest. That afternoon, the British worked up a draft with Cooper and sent it back to us for full clearance. Based on the same factors that had dictated the form of the President's letter—namely the presence of 3–4 North Vietnamese divisions just north of the DMZ who might be introduced very quickly between the assurance and the fact of stopping infiltration—we corrected the British draft so that it insisted that we have assurance that the infiltration had stopped. We will copy to you the version that we finally gave to the British.³ They caught Kosygin just as he took his train that evening, but it is possible, indeed probable, that the earlier “will stop” version was transmitted by the Soviets to Hanoi.

5. We have now somewhat tidied this up with the British, explaining that our own message to Hanoi of the 7th (channel unspecified) has made clear our real view. We have also pointed out that the difference in tense is almost certainly not critical. Wilson feels that he was put out on a limb on the 10th, however, so that there is some remaining friction. However, he now understands our position, and the reasons for it, fully, for his discussions this evening.

6. From your standpoint, the important thing is whether the Soviets may have been misled at any stage. From a direct Dobrynin reference with the Secretary on Friday evening,⁴ we now know that the Soviets are familiar with the contents of the President's letter to Ho, and this direct statement means that you can assume this in any conversations with the Soviets. In short, they knew our position very shortly after the President's letter was delivered, and again had it in clear form when we cleared the authorized version for transmission to Kosygin on the evening of the 10th. At most, they may have been briefly misled on the afternoon of the 10th and may have transmitted to Hanoi a “will stop” version on that afternoon based on that misunderstanding, and on the fact that British had handed over the version they sent to Washington before they had our final clearance.

³ The February 7 text used by Wilson, the original British written text given to Kosygin at the reception on February 10, and the British version with advance U.S. approval transmitted to Kosygin later that evening appear in telegram 135735 to Moscow, February 12. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER)

⁴ February 10.

7. We shall know tonight whether Kosygin even raises the difference in tenses, and what may flow from that. However, we are sending you this background so that you have it in case the ball should move rapidly to you tomorrow.

Rusk

69. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in the Soviet Union¹

Washington, February 12, 1967, 9:05 p.m.

135749. Deliver to Ambassador 7 a.m.

1. At PM Wilson's request the USG authorized Wilson at 1830 EST Sunday night to present following proposition to Kosygin in London forthwith:²

Begin Text

If you can get a North Vietnamese assurance—communicated either direct to the United States or through you—before 10:00 am British time tomorrow that all movement of troops and supplies into South Viet-Nam will stop at that time, I will get an assurance from the US that they will not resume bombing of North Viet-Nam from that time. Of course the US build up would also then stop within a matter of days.

This would then give you and me the opportunity to try to consolidate and build on what has been achieved by bringing the parties together and promoting further balanced measures of de-escalation.

End Text.

2. While likelihood of DRV reply before 10 a.m. GMT is obviously exceedingly slight, direct or indirect dilatory reply from Hanoi might

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER. Top Secret; Immediate; Nodis; Sunflower. There is an indication on the telegram that the President approved it.

² According to a February 12 memorandum from Read to Rusk, Wilson's proposed text was: "If you (Kosygin) can get an assurance from Hanoi, communicated directly to the US or through the Soviets, before 10:00 a.m. GMT tomorrow, that no arms or people will move across the 17th parallel (extended from Gulf of Tonkin through Laos), I (Harold Wilson) will get an assurance from the US that the US will not resume bombing from that time. Having gotten such an assurance from the DRV, the US would stop further augmentation of its forces in the South." Wilson was prepared to accept a U.S. variation of this proposal, according to Read. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Sunflower & Sunflower Plus)

be a likelier possibility. We know that you and Guthrie will be available and on maximum alert throughout remaining time before resumption, now scheduled for 11 a.m. EST Monday³ morning, to flash us any word from DRV which you may receive.

Rusk

³ February 13.

70. Telegram From President Johnson to Prime Minister Wilson¹

Washington, February 12, 1967, 2333Z.

CAP 67045. As I pointed out early this morning, the A–B offer has been outstanding now for about three months. I gather from Cooper that as of the time you went into dinner tonight, you had no reply from Kosygin. We have had no reply from Hanoi.

Nevertheless, you have worked nobly this week to bring about what all humanity wants: a decisive move towards peace. It is an effort that will be long remembered. I feel a responsibility to give you this further chance to make that effort bear fruit. We will go more than half way. I am prepared to go the last mile in this week's particular effort: although none of us can regard a failure tonight as the end of the road.

I must, of course, also bear in mind my responsibility to our men who are fighting there, to our allies, to the people of South Viet Nam who are counting on us to bring about an honorable peace consistent with our commitments to them.

Therefore, I agree with you that you should go forward and try once again with Kosygin saying to him:

[Here follows the verbatim text of the message in Document 69.]

With this deal consummated, we would, of course, be prepared to move promptly to a neutral spot to engage in unconditional negotiations designed to bring peace to the area.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Sunflower & Sunflower Plus. Top Secret. Also sent as telegram 135748 to London, February 12, 9:05 p.m. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER)

Herewith some further observations.

It is significant that Kosygin reflects no further word from Hanoi. Our own private line with Hanoi remains silent. Actually, Kosygin may prefer that any final deal come bilaterally after he leaves London in view of his China problem.

Presumably the two co-chairmen would continue to be in touch with each other. It would be helpful if communiqué could express support of two co-chairmen for 1954 and 1962 Accords and agreement that any differences arising out of these accords should be settled by peaceful means.

71. Telephone Conversation Between President Johnson and Secretary of Defense McNamara¹

Washington, February 12, 1967, 10:13 p.m.

President: Say that "Your noble efforts must be recognized by giving you everything we possibly can without endangering our men," and a little palaver where he's really complimented and we can keep him aboard when he loses the battle and the war. And finally, when we get through with our stump speech and a flag in the blood, say to him something that will not—say it to him as much as we can say without endangering our people too much or unnecessarily. And I would think we could be able—would be able—to say that we will not resume—make it appear as magnanimous and as generous as we can, because we're going to need it for the record, that here, we had it all wrapped up and then we wouldn't answer him or we wouldn't reply. I think that's too dangerous. But we would say we would not resume our bombing, although there're terrible things taking place right now, if Hanoi says they have ceased infiltration—men, supplies, and so forth. And soon as we get that assurance, we will take whatever actions we can to verify it and to observe it by land, sea, air, tunnel, and everything else, that they just be sure they close down and do not one damn thing on infiltrating. And within a period of very minimum necessary

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and McNamara, February 12, 1967, 10:13 p.m., Tape F67.05, Side B, PNO 4. No classification marking. This transcript was prepared in the Office of the Historian specifically for this volume.

hours, if this is true, then we will be glad for he and the Indians, or Wilson and the Canadians or ICC, or anybody, ICC or co-chairmen or anybody else, to observe that we are ordering augmentation stopped. And then we'll go to some neutral city, Geneva or some other place, for conferences in good faith that will try to result in a supervised election and some kind of a self-determination [inaudible]. And get the self-determination and neutralization and everything else we can think of in that part of it. Now, I would say that we're going to gain by bombing during the two or three days, that we are checking to see if infiltration has ceased is not going to be enough—what we gain by bombing is not going to be enough—to justify us insisting on doing it. If we can get that kind of agreement and if we can cut him off from supplying them anyway, under the tunnels or Laos or sea or air, anyway, just make it so damn firm, in effect reiterate just what we've said, but doctor it up a little bit and instead of saying it has stopped just have them say it has stopped. And have Hanoi say that to the Russians and have the Russians say to us just that they believe this is true, or the co-chairmen say that it's true. Anyway, I think we ought to try to write a wire, and when Fulbright thinks he's got you and getting ready to railroad you and sends you right to jail, you can read this wire and he'll say, "I'll be damned, you did all a human could." Now that's what we ought to decide, and you can talk to your military man, and then you can—you ought to come on down to the Cabinet room. And, I'd like to though, while I'm dressing, have your thought on what you would do.

McNamara: Well, I think . . .

President: You just put yourself—now suppose you're President, and you know damn well that we haven't thought this bombing's going to save our life, and we're just hoping against hope that we could get out of it some way or other, and that we could get to a table some way or other. Just bear that in mind now, because we don't want to get up close to it and then get arrogant and cocky.

McNamara: The formulation you suggested is just exactly what I would support, with one minor modification, perhaps. I hate to see another formula put on the table until we have at least word from Wilson that he said to Kosygin, "Well, I gave you a formula on the 7th, and then you asked for it in writing on the 10th, and I gave it to you on the 10th, and then you wanted to be sure it was from the highest authority, so I got that and gave that to you in writing on the 10th. Now, what do you say?" Then I'd come back and say, "Well, Kosygin said nothing, he hadn't been able to get anything out of Hanoi." Then I would still go back with the formula you suggest. But I hate to put another formula on when we haven't even heard from Wilson before he's even asked the question of Kosygin.

President: I just think that makes our case better, Bob, to do just what you said. Just say "Now, I want to thank you for your noble efforts and certainly if nothing results from it, it won't be your fault because you've operated with a tenacity and a fervor that I haven't seen before, and I just—as I understand it, you put it on February the 7th and we told you when we were assured to stop it, and then you came on February the 10th, and you did this, and then they wanted it confirmed, and we confirmed it, and you said 'has,' we said 'has stopped,' and the Chief, you and he both knew we'd already said this to Hanoi ahead of time, so what we said to Hanoi, and what you've said to him the 7th, and what you said to him the 10th, and then when we confirmed it on highest authority, it seems to me that it should have produced something, and it ought to produce something, and if you can't make it produce something I can understand how harassed you must be and how disgusted you must be, but anyway because I love mother and God and little children, I'm still going to authorize you once more to continue your noble work by saying to him so-and-so."

McNamara: Well, sure, that's all right. I'm just a little curious from a negotiating point of view here as to what Kosygin has found out. He must have found out something. You would have thought that the first thing Wilson would say to Kosygin, "Well, now, you've been pressing all week for something. I gave it to you three different ways three different times. You've had 4 days. You said you're in direct contact with Hanoi. Now what have they told you?" And then Kosygin would have had to say they told me something or they told me nothing.

President: Well, I'd suggest that in the wire, I just—and that's a good way to put it if you could write it that way. I don't know why you don't bring your own Negro stenographer over there and just dictate it that way and let us work from there. But I'd say that in the wire: "Now here's what's happening, here's what you've done, you've had four days and you haven't told us anything, now why don't you tell us something?" And then say, "I think you ought to pursue this, because you've done a noble job here, and I'm going to say so to the world, and I think that every freedom-loving person will admire it." Now then, if that has failed, and you've got nothing else, and since it's a completely one-way street anyway, I would say, and then I'd repeat the hardest damned thing to be sure I live with it. Because I have thought 95-5, and not much five, and I don't want, though, when it leaves, him to say, "Well, they wouldn't answer me, number one, and they held back or I could have done it." Every guy thinks—you think you just might have made a million dollars if Henry Ford hadn't have told you not to do something. And let's just play this one for the record. And you be thinking all these things that we stuff up his bottom good and let him dilate before we shoot in the second one, you see. Or you might even get this one off right quick, and say, "I think that would

make the record look a little better." Just say, "We understand, we sympathize with what you're going through, we appreciate your noble efforts, we're going to say this to the world and we know everybody else will appreciate them, but here's what has happened, and give them this résumé, and it looks like this man could say something. And while you're trying to get him to say something, which we'd like for you to report right away, we will give you something in another hour that will at least be the final straw that broke the camel's back."

McNamara: Yeah, I'd be much inclined to take it in two steps.

President: Yes, I think that's good. I think it makes us look like we're—I'd point out the summary that you have and send it to him, and say, "Now, here's what you've done. You offered it to him the 7th, and you couldn't have been more diligent, persistent, tenacious. You offered it to him the 10th. Then you confirmed it. And now he's in charge, he says he's got influence in Hanoi—they told us that, Gromyko—and he says he's been in touch with them. Now what is the answer?" It seems to be a blank silence. So find out the answer and communicate it to us.

McNamara: And we'll then be prepared to respond immediately.

President: And we'll be prepared to respond immediately. And if it's nothing, why we'll still give you every weapon we can before it's over.

McNamara: I think that probably Dean and Walt and I ought to get down there. Should I call Walt and ask him to meet us?

President: I told Walt to call you now but not to do it for 5 minutes—and that's probably him—so I could talk to you.

McNamara: Okay. Thanks.

President: Bye.

72. Telephone Conversation Between President Johnson and the President's Special Assistant (Rostow)¹

Washington, February 12, 1967, 11:03 p.m.

President: Yeah.

Rostow: I gave David [Bruce] the line. He says that he'd just like to put down his own view of this matter and he'll file something. He

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and Rostow, February 12, 1967, 11:03 p.m., Tape F67.05, Side B, PNO 5. No classification marking. This transcript was prepared in the Office of the Historian specifically for this volume.

said my feelings won't be hurt. He just wants to put something down on paper.

President: Oh, he's wants to be a Goddamned peace-maker.

Rostow: Its very hard to discourage him. He said, "Oh, don't worry about it. By the way, I don't feel very strongly. I don't think anything will come of it." But he has this vision of Kosygin being the one fellow who was really, because of his fear of the Chinese, really trying to push this thing, and he'd like him to have enough time to talk to his colleagues. The other thing is Bill Bundy told me this was a flight that would be 4 hours. I checked with the NMCC. They say its 4 hours and 50 minutes. And I found a pilot who says that with that kind of plane it might take 5 hours and 35 minutes. So, he might not touch down before the bombing began, but I don't really think that's a federal case. But in any case, sir—so David will be filing. We don't have to tell the British anything right now. I gave—I told David that he would . . .

President: I wished he wouldn't file it. Why do we want this in our file when they investigate us? Why in the hell didn't he just tell you . . .

Rostow: I tried, very, very hard just for that reason. I didn't want to say this on the line. I gave him a flat instruction, and it said when you come back, you've got time. You don't have to file now. You don't have to tell the British right away. Give it to them—they've all gone to sleep anyway—give it to them in the morning whatever the time is. And don't pay any attention to this, but I want to give you my impressions, and . . .

President: What did he tell you—did he give them to you then? Did he give them to you on the phone?

Rostow: He sure did. I could write an essay on them.

President: Well, why does he want to make a record of them?

Rostow: Well, I don't know, I guess, he said he wanted Secretary Rusk to consider it, and so on.

President: Tell him you'll convey them to him.

Rostow: He couldn't have had . . . [laughing]. He knew that I'd turned it off to speak to you, and I said, "Now here are the four points," and I gave them to him. One—we bought his language and his timing. Two—they've had it 3 months. Three—they had it direct since Tuesday.² Four—there's no reason why if they buy any such proposal they can't come back when the bombing's stopped and march through it loud and clear. And he said, well, it might give him a chance to talk to his colleagues or something. He's for us.

² February 10.

President: Now who says that he wants to talk to his colleagues? Did he say that? Did Kosygin say that?

Rostow: Of course he didn't. Kosygin was wholly correct. All Kosygin said was—one, I will transmit. He did not say he will back this. Two—I will sit aside; he said, "I may be regarded as a traitor because this will leave a hundred thousand fellows down there at the mercy of everybody." Three, he said "That ain't much time." But we didn't fake up the time. Can't Wilson do arithmetic? Well, sir, I'm just reporting it, sir. I'm just going to open the cot back here, and I'll be here all night to pick up. So don't you worry about it. But I do think . . .

President: Wonder what we're going to do about it, though? If he goes to—Bruce just wants to make it hard on us, doesn't he?

Rostow: No, I don't believe that's right, sir. I think . . .

President: Well, is there anything he can tell you about why he hadn't already told you?

Rostow: No, sir.

President: Why—why then?

Rostow: I guess he wanted just to get them to Secretary Rusk—I don't know why he wants to file the wires.

President: Why don't you have Rusk call him and tell him?

Rostow: All right, sir.

President: Have you talked to Rusk lately?

Rostow: Not in the last half hour.

President: Does he favor going ahead?

Rostow: Yes, he does. He's the one that keeps saying they should have the information and . . .

President: Answer—he does go ahead. McNamara favors going ahead too.

Rostow: That's right.

President: I'll call Rusk and ask him to call this fellow and tell him that he doesn't want him worrying him in the middle of the night; that he's glad to get his views and debate it with him and resolve it, and so he ought to tell him.³

³ In a telephone conversation later that evening, Rusk told President Johnson that Bruce had agreed not to send the telegram containing his summary of events. (Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and Rusk, February 12, 1967, 11:08 p.m., Tape F67.05, Side B, PNO 7)

73. Telephone Conversation Between President Johnson and the President's Special Assistant (Rostow)¹

Washington, February 12, 1967, 11:17 p.m.

Rostow: Here's the possible draft, sir. "We've considered the case for a further delay to receive a message from Hanoi beyond 10:00 a.m. British time, which you suggested. I've gone into this with my senior advisers, and we are prepared to hold for receipt of the North Vietnamese assurance until 11:00 a.m. Washington time, 4 p.m. your time."

President: Add "postpone," or "delay" or something. Hold is not a good word. Let's say . . .

Rostow: "To delay"?

President: Let's see if we can tie it to their suggestion, "to attempt to comply with the thoughts you expressed or imparted," or something like that. Read what you've got there again.

Rostow: "I've gone into this with my senior advisers, and we are prepared to . . ."

President: ". . . and after carefully considering your suggestion and thorough evaluation of the problems you present, the problems here, and the morale . . ."

Rostow: That comes in later.

President: ". . . of our uniformed men, we are extending the time"—6 hours, is it?

Rostow: That's right.

President: "Six hours." Something like that. Then give your times.

Rostow: "After carefully considering your suggestions, the problems you present, and the problems . . ."

President: ". . . and the problems here."

Rostow: "and the problems here, including . . ."

President: ". . . the morale of our uniformed men, we . . ."

Rostow: "We shall."

President: "We are extending . . ."

Rostow: "We are extending."

President: ". . . we are extending the time as you suggested, but feel national interest requires extending the time as you suggested as long as we feel the national interest permits . . ."—or something like

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and Rostow, February 12, 1967, 11:17 p.m., Tape F67.06, Side A, PNO 1. No classification marking. This transcript was prepared in the Office of the Historian specifically for this volume.

that—" . . . for extending the time for six hours, which we believe, all factors considered, is as long as we can justify."

Rostow: ". . . for 6 hours . . . as long . . . justify."

President: "As long as we believe is advisable," maybe.

Rostow: Yeah, I think that's better.

President: "As long as we believe is advisable."

Rostow: "As long as we believe is advisable." Right.

President: I would say something, "Our senior military men have opposed not only Tet truce but all extensions thereto."

Rostow: "You should understand . . ."

President: Yes. "I believe you would want to know that our military advisers have unanimously opposed not only Tet truce but all extensions thereto."

Rostow: "Our senior military men."

President: Yes, "have unanimously." "Our Joint Chiefs and commanders in the field have unanimously opposed—Our Joint Chiefs and General Westmoreland—Our Joint Chiefs, CINCPAC, and General Westmoreland have unanimously opposed Tet truce and any extension thereto." That's true, isn't it?

Rostow: Yes, sir.

President: Buzz had a pretty strong letter yesterday on it.² I believe you would want to know.

Rostow: [inaudible]

President: Right. I'd say, "not only on the ground of morale but on the cost in human lives, in American lives—not only on the ground of morale but on the cost in American lives."

Rostow: ". . . not only on the ground of morale but on the cost in American lives."

President: All right. "Therefore . . ."—give them the times announcement.

Rostow: "Unless we get his assurance, military operations . . ."

President: I wouldn't say "unless." I'd say "we will wait for assurance until."

Rostow: All right. "We will wait for assurance for a receipt."

President: "We will wait for any information—we will wait for any forthcoming information—we will wait for any information that may be forthcoming until 11:00 o'clock our time and . . ." whatever it is.

² See Document 62.

Rostow: "4:00 p.m. your time. Unless military operations against the North—unless we get that—I have assurance, military operations will resume between 11:00 a.m. and . . ."

President: I wouldn't say "unless." How's that sentence go now? "We will wait until 11 our time for any information that may be forthcoming, and—but military operations will not be delayed beyond that point—that time."

Rostow: "Military operations will resume between 11 a.m. and noon."

President: That's right—"will be authorized to resume, but may not resume—will be permitted," is what I'd say. "Be expected to resume" or "permitted to resume."

Rostow: All right . . . "permitted to resume" . . . "our time." I had some more palaver, if you do want to hear that.

President: Yeah.

Rostow: "In making this decision, I bore in mind their problems of transmittal in two ways. But I have also been conscious of the fact they have had the possibility of responding to this message with the 3 months since it was given to the Poles and you gave it to the Russians, in the 5 days since it was transmitted directly to Hanoi and given by you to Kosygin. If there is any interest in some such A-B proposition, there has been ample time for them to either agree or come back with a counter-proposal. Your gallant last-minute effort, which I was glad to back, is one on which they must move fast in any case. On receiving it, they must be either be ready to make a response . . ."

President: I wouldn't say "on which I was glad to back"—"on which I agreed to—on which I consented to . . ."

Rostow: "On which I consented to support. . ."

President: No—"On which I consented to . . ."

Rostow: Oh, I see. I got it sir. "On which I consented to . . ." Got it.

President: Go ahead.

Rostow: ". . . is one which they must move fast in any case. On receiving it, they must either be ready to make a response or not. A few hours either way cannot be significant."

President: I wouldn't say "move fast." I'd say "move." That implies . . .

Rostow: Yes, sir. Yes, sir. "You must also bear in mind that the offer for a reciprocal deescalation remains available to them when we resume bombing the North."

President: Cut out "also." Just say "you must bear in mind" or say "bear in mind."

Rostow: Yes, sir. Right. "Bear in mind the offer for reciprocal de-escalation remains available to them when we resume bombing the North."

President: "Bear in mind" what?

Rostow: "Bear in mind that the offer for a reciprocal de-escalation remains available to them when we resume bombing the North. The channel to open up discussions . . ."

President: I wouldn't say that. "Bear in mind that the offer to"—what is it?

Rostow: "For a reciprocal de-escalation."

President: ". . . for a reciprocal de-escalation has not been withdrawn."

Rostow: I think that's good—"has not been withdrawn . . ."

President: ". . . and can be accepted any moment they desire to do so—they may desire to do so. Even though operations are in effect, they could be suspended momentarily."

Rostow: The way I have it there was—"I also had to bear in mind my responsibilities to the men in the field." But you've already got that in. "They must be in a position to protect themselves. Right now supplies and weapons are moving down at a high rate."

President: I'd leave that in right now.

Rostow: "Bearing in mind their safety and their morale, I could not spare my responsibilities for another extension beyond those 6 hours. Hope you have a good chance to catch up on sleep after this arduous and interesting week."

President: I wouldn't—I'd leave—I'd cut out the first sentence on troops, and the next one—read that second one you read. "Men and supplies are moving down right now."

Rostow: "Right now supplies and weapons are moving down at a high rate," which is true, incidentally, sir. "Bearing in mind their safety and their morale . . ."

President: "Bearing in mind the safety of more than a half million of our men—more than half a million of our men . . ."

Rostow: "I could not spare my responsibilities for an extension beyond those 6 hours."

President: I want to make it positive. "I feel that to grant in part—to go along in part with your suggestion for an extension is—could be costly, but I am so anxious—but I desire so much to cooperate fully, I have extended it for an additional 6 hours."

Rostow: Could you do that again, sir? "I feel that to go along in part with your suggestion for an extension . . ."

President: Now wait a minute. Read it again.

Rostow: "Bearing in mind the safety of more than a half million of our men, I feel that to go along . . ."

President: ". . . in part with your suggestion . . ."

Rostow: ". . . to go along with part of your suggestion . . ."

President: ". . . by extending—I can go along in part—I should—bearing in mind . . ."—read that again.

Rostow: "Bearing in mind the safety of more than a half million of our men, I feel . . ."

President: ". . . that I should go along in part with your suggestion—I should go as far as possible to meet your suggestion—go as far as possible to meet your suggestion, and therefore am stretching the resumption time by another—by extending—stretching the beginning of military operations—stretching the beginning of military operations by extending the resumption time another 6 hours. Considering all the time and conversation that have gone on before, this . . ."³

³ For the telegram as sent, see Document 74.

74. Telegram From President Johnson to Prime Minister Wilson¹

Washington, February 11, 1967, 0533Z.

CAP 67046. Monday, February 13, 1967.

From the President to the Prime Minister

We have considered the case for further delay to receive a message from Hanoi beyond 10:00 A.M. British time, which you suggested.

I have gone into this with my senior advisers and, after carefully considering your suggestion, the problems you presented, and the problems here—including the morale of our uniformed men—we are extending the time by 6 hours. This is as long as we believe is advisable.

I am sure you would want to know that our Joint Chiefs, CINCPAC, and General Westmoreland have unanimously opposed the Tet and other truces and extensions thereto—not only on the grounds of

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Sunflower & Sunflower Plus. Top Secret. The Department sent a copy to the Embassy in London in telegram 135758, February 13. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER)

troop morale but because of the cost in human lives.² We will wait, then, for information that may be forthcoming until 11:00 A.M. Washington time—4:00 P.M. your time. Military operations against the North will be permitted to resume between 11:00 A.M. and noon our time.

In making this decision I bore in mind Moscow's and Hanoi's problems of transmittal two ways. But I also was conscious of the fact that they have had the possibility of responding to essentially this message for the 3 months since we gave it to the Poles and you gave it to the Russians; and the 5 days since it was transmitted direct to Hanoi and also given by you to Kosygin.

If there is any interest in some such A–B proposition, there has been—and still is—ample time for them either to agree or to come back with a counter-proposal.

Your gallant last minute effort—which I consented to—is one on which they must move. On receiving it they must be either ready to make a response or not. A few hours either way cannot be significant. Bear in mind that the offer for a reciprocal de-escalation has not been withdrawn. It can be accepted any moment they may desire to do so, even though operations are in effect. They could be suspended momentarily. The channels for discussions on these or other lines will remain open.

Right now supplies and weapons are moving down from the North at a high rate. While bearing in mind the safety of more than a half million of our men, I feel I should, nevertheless, go as far as possible to meet your suggestion and, therefore, am stretching the beginning of military operations by another 6 hours.

Considering all the time and conversation that has gone on before, this allows added time for talk if they are really serious.

I hope you have a good chance to catch up on sleep after this arduous and interesting week which, I am inclined to believe, will prove in the end to have been most constructive.

² For the views of Sharp and Westmoreland, see footnote 9, Document 30. For those of the JCS, see Document 90.

75. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, February 13, 1967, 1100Z.

17875. 1. Pursuant to your 135744,² I flew to Dalat Monday afternoon and saw Ky.

2. I recalled that the U.S. had decided to refrain from bombing the North until Kosygin left London. This decision, I said, was dictated solely by extreme British concern and the vital importance of keeping British support. We believed that the British might have been seriously disturbed if their talks with Kosygin had produced no results—which seems likely. We also did not want to be in the position of being blamed because their talks with Kosygin had produced nothing. While we are not yet sure that either the British or the Soviets can play any useful role, we felt that resumption of bombing would have heavily damaged any such prospect. Moreover, we believe repercussions in British public opinion could have placed Prime Minister Wilson in an almost untenable position, and the U.S. considers that his support remains of major importance in the European picture and more broadly.

3. This decision, I added, does not mean that either the British or we have any indication that Hanoi will accept the proposal which I described to Ky Saturday. We believe Kosygin has transmitted the proposal on to Hanoi but we have no more reason than before to suppose that it will be accepted. Kosygin had nothing new Sunday to convey to Wilson on the subject.

4. The latest development in London, I said, is that at Prime Minister Wilson's suggestion we have authorized him to tell Kosygin that if Hanoi accepts our proposal by 10:00 A.M., London time today (5:00 P.M. Saigon time), we would continue the bombing suspension. The requirement remains, I added, that Hanoi must assure us that infiltration has stopped, with our cessation of augmentation of U.S. forces to follow in a few days.

5. I declared that we have made it absolutely clear to the British that in the absence of Hanoi acceptance, we expect to resume bombing the North within a few hours after Kosygin's departure from London, which is expected to be about 6:00 P.M. Saigon time today (Mon-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 27-14 VIET/SUNFLOWER. Top Secret; Immediate; Nodis; Sunflower Plus. Received at 7:02 a.m.

² Telegram 135744 to Saigon, February 12, explained to Lodge that primarily British pressure caused the Johnson administration to defer a bombing resumption and it urged him to inform Ky promptly of the continued suspension. (Ibid.)

day). We have also, I said, made absolutely clear to the British that we are maintaining our basic position of not stopping the bombing in exchange for mere talks of any sort.

6. If we resume the bombing, I told him that we expect to make a public statement on Monday (Washington time) along the following lines:

A) "As you know, the South Vietnamese Government announced on the 11th that its forces and those of other nations assisting South Viet-Nam would resume normal operations during the day on February 12. This resumption was in accordance with the truce period announced by the South Vietnamese Government some weeks ago. As the South Vietnamese had made clear in early January and again last week, it was prepared to discuss extension of the truce period at any time. There was no response to this offer.

B) "During the Tet period, bombing and other military operations against North Viet-Nam were also suspended. This suspension was continued for a short additional period in order to avoid any possibility that earlier resumption would be misconstrued in relation to Mr Kosygin's visit to London. Operations have not been resumed."

7. I said that many speculative press stories were now appearing, adding that General Westmoreland and I had made (and would make) no comment whatsoever about the matter before this statement is issued in Washington, I repeated that secrecy on this matter is of the highest importance.

8. Finally I recalled his expression of concern Saturday³ regarding the effectiveness of the International Control Commission in verifying possible infiltration from the North. I said I would like to add to what I said then that in the unlikely event that Hanoi should take up the proposal we would expect ourselves to conduct extensive reconnaissance. Our reconnaissance capabilities together with other intelligence operations in Laos should, I said, give us a virtual certainty of detecting any substantial North Vietnamese violations of an undertaking to stop infiltration.

9. Ky's only reply was to thank me and to say in French: "J'ai peur que Hanoi va vous jouer un mauvais tour" which I translate as: "I'm afraid Hanoi will play a dirty trick on you." He repeated that we would both be much stronger in a few months: militarily and, above

³ February 11.

all, politically—which, he stressed, underlay the military. We would, he said, be stronger after the hamlet elections were held next month than we are now.⁴

Lodge

⁴ In telegram 18022 from Saigon, February 15, Lodge informed the Department of his opinion that the decision to let Ky know of the events in London “was unquestionably wise.” He suggested that potential friction could be avoided if the United States would inform the South Vietnamese Government what it was planning to do ahead of time. Due to a “strong sense of fatalism” in the South Vietnamese, Lodge worried that they might become “capable of desperate action” if they were left out of the channels of information. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER)

76. Editorial Note

On February 13, 1967, President Lyndon Johnson met from 8:29 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. with a group of his senior foreign policy advisers, including General Earle Wheeler, Robert McNamara, Cyrus Vance, Walt Rostow, Nicholas Katzenbach, Hubert Humphrey, William Bundy, Maxwell Taylor, and Foy Kohler. (Johnson Library, President’s Daily Diary) The meeting concerned the attempt by British Prime Minister Harold Wilson and Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin to broker an arrangement that would lead to an opening of peace talks on Vietnam. According to handwritten notes of the meeting taken by Presidential aide Tom Johnson, the following exchange occurred:

“Buz Wheeler: *Following a presentation describing the increase in North Vietnamese infiltration, Wheeler added:* Have not suffered any ill effects. Movement of supply has been substantial. W/O it could move 1/5 of it. Postponement—Yes, I favor it because this is the 1st time Soviets have been in like this.

“VP: Chinese sit(uation) may mean they can’t hold this power over Hanoi. Time element is very desirable, if even for a couple of hours.

“Bill Bundy: Use open line to Thompson. Russians will intercept. Announce here at 12 o’clock.

“Rostow: Favor proposal made. Have reacted to Kosygin request.

“Pres.: Asked Nick to draft cable to Wilson. Add another 7 hours on bombing but will try to minimize movement of supply by naval forces. *Following comments by Bundy and McNamara, the President added:* Don’t want to get involved in another extension if not doing any good.

“Rostow: (No indication of a response)

“Bundy: Urged until 3 p.m. for naval gunfire.

“McNamara: Thro British put proposals to Kosygin. K sent to Hanoi. If they stop infil. we will cease bombing of N. on Sat. Hanoi told embassy had transmitted our Kosygin to Brezhnev. Have transmitted our proposal. Soviet has endorsed our proposal. Wilson wanted five more hours. Gave until 11 a.m. this a.m. Planned to resume at noon. Now to 7 p.m. tonight. Execute message at 3. Naval gunfire start at noon. Does Hanoi distinguish between gunfire and bombing.

“Wheeler: Another 2–3 hours won’t have any effect.

“Pres: Stand on alert until 3 p.m. our time. Bombing starts at 7. Naval gunfire to be moved back.

“VP: Argued with McN—1st time Soviets began. This is risk worth taking. Ought to give extra hours.

“Pres: If military people are satisfied.

“Buzz: This is a political decision. Not going to make that much difference militarily.

“Bundy: We’ve gone more notches.

“Max Taylor: No prob. in postponing mil. gunfire.

“*Tom Johnson noted: At 12—resumption of mil. action authorized. Announcement of resumption & bombing falling at same time.*” (Ibid., Tom Johnson’s Notes of Meetings)

77. Telephone Conversation Between President Johnson and Secretary of Defense McNamara¹

Washington, February 13, 1967, 11:55 a.m.

McNamara: Mr. President, may I call Walt Rostow and ask him to work up a contingency press release that would respond to allegations that we screwed up another peace effort and that would make reference to the 10-mile restriction, the Polish talks, the bombing of the 13th, 14th, the current discussions, etc.? Wilson has just put out a statement that is likely to raise questions later. It says that based on his talks with Kosygin, he claims a peace could be arranged. I don’t have it right in front of me, but that’s the essence of it. And our public relations people feel they’re going to be pressed very hard after we put out the an-

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and McNamara, February 13, 1967, 11:55 a.m., Tape F67.06, Side A, PNO 2. No classification marking. This transcript was prepared in the Office of the Historian specifically for this volume.

nouncement this afternoon as to whether there were peace talks, and what they were, and why they failed, and why didn't we continue with the [restriction on] bombing Hanoi.

President: I don't think that we'd want to get into the London conversations too much though now, do you?

McNamara: I'd stay away from them. But I'd just like to see the best possible statement from your point of view protecting you written down so we have it available, because we don't know what Wilson is going to say. He's going to try to make himself a hero and if things didn't succeed it was really not his fault but ours, which is what I fear will come out of all this. I'll call Walt.

President: Yeah, okay, I think that's all right. Now, he's landed, I assume, by now.

McNamara: Yes, he should have. Five minutes ago.

President: Have you heard anything back?

McNamara: No, I haven't, although . . .

President: From Buzz?

McNamara: No, I talked to Buzz just a moment ago, but we don't have anything on the bombing yet, but the naval gunfire is due to start in 5 minutes. And we may of course be queried as a result of a Hanoi statement that gunfire has started, and I've already given our people a statement they can make under those circumstances.

President: When do you think the other thing will come on?

McNamara: Well, my guess is that it will start around 2:30 or so and we'll hear about it 3:00 to 3:30.

President: Okay.

McNamara: Goodbye. Thank you.

78. Telephone Conversation Between President Johnson and Secretary of Defense McNamara¹

Washington, February 13, 1967, 12:28 p.m.

President: Yes?

McNamara: Mr. President, Uly Sharp just called and said the first strike was over the target at 12:10. He had some planes that were saddled up in fact and he just sent them off. I thought this was about what would happen. I think we should go with the announcement. We should have some kind of thing.

President: Well, what're you going to say now?

McNamara: Let's check on it right here. "Combat operations against military targets in North Vietnam have now been resumed. The suspension of these operations, initiated at the beginning of Tet, was continued beyond the end of Tet for a short additional time in order to avoid any possibility that earlier resumption would be misconstrued in relation to Mr. Kosygin's visit to London."

President: All right, now, let me hold a minute. I told Walt to tell the British in his conversation with them they'd have a few more hours. Let me see if I could top that.

McNamara: Sure.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and McNamara, February 13, 1967, 12:28 p.m., Tape F67.06, Side A, PNO 3. No classification marking. This transcript was prepared in the Office of the Historian specifically for this volume.

79. Telephone Conversation Between President Johnson and Secretary of Defense McNamara¹

Washington, February 13, 1967, 12:31 p.m.

McNamara: Uh, yes, I did, at least I read what the wire said it was. I didn't read the . . .

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and McNamara, February 13, 1967, 12:31 p.m., Tape F67.06, Side A, PNO 4. No classification marking. This transcript was prepared in the Office of the Historian specifically for this volume.

President: What is it—just hold out a little hope that's not there?

McNamara: Yeah, well it . . .

President: I told Walt to tell the British that this could get up false hopes, and that if we were going to be partners in this thing, he had to constantly remember that for 3 months now we had no reply from Hanoi, and I didn't know anybody that ever quoted Hanoi on anything, and how in the hell could he say that you can have peace with somebody that never has even answered you?

McNamara: Yeah. Well, I think its extremely important that you not be put in the position of torpedoing peace again. And this is just exactly what Wilson would try to do to bring glory to himself. He had it all made, and you screwed it up. I wouldn't put it that vulgarly, but that's about the air he would give the whole thing. And then he would go on to say, "Of course, if peace ever comes, it will really be because of my efforts and my ability to finally pound some sense into the head of the Americans." Now I think we have to be prepared to counter that. The first thing to do is just what you have done—have them call—tell—David Bruce to turn that off. The second thing to do is to have a good contingency story here. I talked to Walt after I talked to you and he said he would prepare one. I also called Nick [Katzenbach] and asked him to work on it as well. And I'll put this out right away.²

President: Right.

McNamara: Bye.

² George Christian read the following statement by the President during his news conference at 4:15 p.m. that day: "It had been our hope that the truce periods connected with Christmas, New Year, and Tet might lead to some abatement of hostilities and to moves toward peace. Unfortunately the only response we had from the Hanoi government was to use the periods for major resupply efforts of their troops in South Vietnam. Despite our efforts and those of third parties, no other response has yet come from Hanoi. Under these circumstances, in fairness to our own troops and those of our allies, we had no alternative but to resume full scale hostilities after the cease-fire. But the door to peace is and will remain open and we are prepared at any time to go more than halfway to meet any equitable overture from the other side." (*Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1967, Book I, p. 178*)

80. Editorial Note

On February 13, 1967, Prime Minister Harold Wilson spoke before Parliament about the events that had transpired during the just concluded visit of Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin. He described a "secret plan" for peace that had been generated by himself and Kosygin, and

purported that an end to the fighting in Vietnam “could have been very near.” Wilson blamed in part the North Vietnamese troop movements that had occurred during the Tet truce for the failure of the plan’s implementation. His speech was excerpted in *The New York Times*, February 14, 1967.

In Circular 137167, February 14, the Department cautioned Embassies that there had in fact been no “secret plan” developed during the period in question. Wilson had simply put forward a variation of the position stated by Representative to the United Nations Arthur Goldberg the previous September that required assurances of reciprocal action by the other side. The position of the U.S. Government “remained unchanged” from the Goldberg statement throughout the talks. In addition, the southward infiltration of the Communists had buttressed the position that the United States had consistently maintained. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S; for Goldberg’s statement of September 22, 1966, see *Foreign Relations*, 1964–1968, volume IV, Document 244)

It first appeared that Wilson took the disappointment in stride. In telegram 6543 from London, February 14, U.S. officials Philip Kaiser and Chester Cooper reported on their meeting with Prime Minister Wilson and his advisers soon after the Parliament speech. The British leaders noted their satisfaction with the U.S. Government’s going “more than half way” in its efforts to accommodate North Vietnam. Wilson stated that he could deal with domestic political problems that had arisen due to the failure of the initiative, especially since the British press was describing North Vietnam as “the villain in the piece” due to its failure to accede to the terms offered which might have led to the opening of peace talks. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET) During the debate, a member of the House of Commons had put forth a query as to the “replenishment” of U.S. forces during the Tet truce. In telegram 142063 to London, February 21, the Department suggested that Wilson reply to the query by stating that only “normal replenishment” of U.S. forces had occurred during the Tet cease-fire period while the movement of Communist forces during the same interval “was conservatively 5 times that normally occurring in non-truce periods.” (Ibid.)

Indications that Prime Minister Wilson found the results of Sunflower troubling arose soon after the overture’s termination. On February 25 Walt Rostow informed the President and Secretary of State Rusk of a conversation that he had with Wilson. Rostow stated that “the main point of his interview with me was to get off his chest his frustrations with the week with Kosygin.” The Prime Minister’s main difficulty was with what he perceived as a “breakdown in communications,” resulting in an “ultimatum” that foreclosed any chance of a successful outcome. Rostow allowed Wilson “to use my presence to

unload his feelings.” Because of his support of U.S. efforts in Vietnam, Wilson now faced significant obstacles in Britain. Rostow impressed upon Wilson that the President had three main concerns: 1) to safeguard a half million troops in Vietnam, 2) the danger that a failed peace would undermine the administration’s political base at home, and 3) the likelihood that the search for peace would degenerate into a Panmunjom-style negotiation since the North Vietnamese leadership showed no “will” to negotiate. (Telegram 6894 from London, February 25; Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Sunflower & Sunflower Plus)

Later, Wilson was to cite President Johnson’s refusal to extend the cease-fire just a few more hours as a principal reason for collapse of this initiative. See Harold Wilson, *The Labour Government, 1964–1970* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971), page 442; Ben Pimlott, *Harold Wilson* (London: Harpercollins, 1992), pages 460–465; and Chester L. Cooper, *The Lost Crusade: The Full Story of U.S. Involvement in Vietnam From Roosevelt to Nixon* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1970), pages 362–369.

81. Telegram From the Embassy in the Soviet Union to the Department of State¹

Moscow, February 15, 1967, 1150Z.

3503. Ref: Moscow 3501.²

1. At Le Chang’s request (Hoang Manh Tu phoned Akalovsky at 11:45), DCM called on him at 13:00 today.

2. Le Chang handed DCM Ho Chi Minh’s reply to President’s message delivered February 8, requesting that it be transmitted to President (septel).³ Le Chang then made the following additional oral statement:

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER. Top Secret; Immediate; Nodis; Sunflower Plus. Received at 7:57 a.m.

² Telegram 3501 from Moscow, February 15, 1043Z, read: “Le Chang handed DCM at 1:00 p.m. Ho Chi Minh’s reply to President’s letter. Reply completely unyielding and in subsequent oral remarks, Le Chang said he could no longer meet with U.S. representatives in Moscow. Text and full report follow.” (Ibid.)

³ See Document 32. The translation of Ho Chi Minh’s reply is printed as an attachment to Document 82.

A. Position and attitude of DRV Govt are very correct and serious, and enjoy strong support of world public opinion, including American people. US, however, always obstinate and perfidious, and it continues advance conditions for cessation of bombings.

B. US had made use of DRV representative's receiving US representative in Moscow to deceive public opinion that secret negotiations going on while bombings continue.

C. Lately, US extended so-called suspension of bombings during Tet. Less than two days later, bombings were resumed on pretext that there had been no response from Hanoi. This constitutes insolent ultimatum to compel Vietnamese people to accept unacceptable conditions.

D. In such circumstances, DRV representative does not consider it possible receive US representative in Moscow on US proposal. Responsibility for this rests completely with US.⁴

3. After making sure he understood Le Chang's final statement correctly, DCM called his attention to President's February 13 statement⁵ and cited sentence stating that door to peace is and will remain open and US prepared go more than half way to meet any equitable overture from other side.

4. In response, Le Chang quoted final portion Ho's message, beginning with sentence stipulating cessation of bombings and all other acts of war against DRV as precondition if US really desires conversations.

5. Meeting was attended by usual participants and lasted 15 minutes.

Thompson

⁴ In a February 15 memorandum to Katzenbach, Bundy found Le Chang's remarks "of possible interest." He speculated that Le Chang's statements put forth a "teaser" designed to mean that "the door was not really shut if we keep our mouths shut about the channel." (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER)

⁵ See footnote 2, Document 79.

82. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, February 15, 1967, 10:15 a.m.

Mr. President:

Attached is our translation of Ho's flat no, plus the comments made in transmittal.² They are breaking off the Moscow contact.

We cannot know what is running through their minds, but we must assume that "no bombing for the possibility of talk" was as much of a consensus as Ho could get out of his split government; it may have shaken and, even, frightened them that Moscow would consider a formula involving the end of infiltration; and we must assume that they have decided to sweat us out to the 1968 election and, if they lose, withdraw silently rather than to negotiate—although the latter judgment is clearly premature.

Therefore, I recommend a stock-taking of Viet Nam policy designed to:

—decide what we do in the North (electric power; steel; cement; mining of ports; naval gunfire to shore; or what?).

—how to accelerate all aspects of military and political action in the South.

—and, in particular, how to shift the peace effort to the South via amnesty, contacts, Saigon–NLF dialogue, etc.

In any case, Nick, Cy, and I will be putting our heads together; and next week—perhaps Tuesday lunch, when I believe Sect. Rusk will be back—we can go into it and move.³

Walt

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Sunflower & Sunflower Plus. Top Secret; Sunflower Plus; Literally Eyes Only for the President.

² The comments are printed as Document 81.

³ The Department apprised Rusk, who was at the Punta del Este Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of American States, of Ho's letter in telegram 137496 to Buenos Aires, Tosec 35, February 15. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER)

Attachment⁴

Lyndon B. Johnson

President of the United States

Your Excellency:

On February 10, 1967, I received your message.⁵ Here is my reply:

Vietnam is thousands of miles from the United States. The Vietnamese people have never done any harm to the United States, but contrary to the commitments made by its representative at the Geneva Conference of 1954, the United States Government has constantly intervened in Vietnam, has launched and intensified its aggression against South Vietnam for the purpose of prolonging the division of Vietnam and of transforming South Vietnam into an American colony and an American military base. For more than two years now, the American Government, using its military planes and its navy has been waging war against the sovereign and independent Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

The U.S. Government has committed war crimes and crimes against peace and against humanity. In South Vietnam, a half million American soldiers and soldiers from satellite countries have used the most inhuman and barbaric methods of warfare such as napalm, chemicals and toxic gases to massacre our compatriots, destroy their crops and level their villages. In North Vietnam, thousands of American planes have rained down hundreds of thousands of tons of bombs destroying towns, villages, factories, roads, bridges, dikes, dams and even churches, pagodas, hospitals and schools. In your message you seem to deplore the suffering and the destruction in Vietnam. Allow me to ask you: who is perpetrating these awful crimes? It is the American and satellite soldiers. The United States Government is entirely responsible for the critical situation in Vietnam.

American aggression against the Vietnamese people is a challenge to the countries of the Socialist camp, menaces the peoples' independence movement and gravely endangers peace in Asia and the world.

The Vietnamese people deeply love independence, liberty and peace. But, in the face of American aggression, they stand as one man, unafraid of sacrifices, until they have gained real independence, full liberty and true peace. Our just cause is approved and supported strongly by all the people of the world, including large segments of the American people.

⁴ The attachment, which is marked "Informal Translation," is a retyped copy of telegram 3502 from Moscow, February 15. (Ibid.)

⁵ See Document 40.

The Government of the United States is aggressing against Vietnam. It must stop this aggression as the only way leading toward the re-establishment of peace. The Government of the United States must stop the bombing, definitively and unconditionally, and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, withdraw from South Vietnam all its troops and those of its satellites, recognize the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam and allow the people of Vietnam to settle their problems by themselves. This is the essence of the Four Points of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam as well as the expression of the principles and essential provisions of the Geneva Accords of 1954 on Vietnam. It is the basis for a just political solution of the Vietnamese problem. In your message, you suggested direct talks between the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the United States. If the Government of the United States really wants such talks, it must first unconditionally halt the bombing as well as all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Only after the unconditional stopping of the bombing and all other American acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam can the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the United States enter into conversations and discuss the questions in which both parties are interested.

The Vietnamese people will never yield to force nor agree to talks under the menace of bombs.

Our cause is entirely just. It is our hope that the Government of the United States acts with reason.

Sincerely yours,

Ho Chi Minh

83. Telephone Conversation Between President Johnson and the President's Special Assistant (Rostow)¹

Washington, February 15, 1967, 9:24 a.m.

Rostow: [Here follows Rostow's reading of the reply of Ho Chi Minh as delivered by Le Chang, the North Vietnamese Chargé in

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and Rostow, February 15, 1967, 9:24 a.m., Tape F67.06, Side B, PNO 1 & 2. No classification marking. This transcript was prepared in the Office of the Historian specifically for this volume.

Moscow.]² So it's about flat as it could be, sir. I'll get it translated. I wanted you to know immediately. My first reaction is that we ought to fairly soon soberly take stock of where we go from here both on the North and the South and political policy. But I wanted you to know right away, sir.

President: We got a letter in here from these Congressmen—they've already released it—on the CIA. I don't know—I guess we better send it over to Nick [Katzenbach] and get him to answer it. But I'll send it over to you. The first thing you better talk to Nick about is what kind of acknowledgment Henry Wilson³ ought to make, and then get that dictated to Henry, and get Meg to call these fellows in and tell them what's happening. And I think somebody ought to get a little brochure on *Ramparts*, and let them know what's happening here, that this is a Communist propaganda campaign, and I think we're going to have to tell the country that all these speeches are being used as propaganda against your men, every one of these speeches. Don't you think so?

Rostow: It's perfectly obvious. They still think they've got enough of a hold on us through public opinion and these public speeches to make us stand down. They haven't given that up. No, I think there are a number of moves. This is the end of one phase and I think that as far as Hanoi is concerned, we ought to stop probing them. We ought really to put on a major effort, not only of course to accelerate the military and all that, but to work on Chieu Hoi contacts on the Southerners, and take an attitude for a little while, "You call me, I won't call you" for a bit. I think it's—it may encourage them that we have been just so—to them we may look over-anxious. Now, we have a delicate balance; we want to keep the door open. I think a little hard work, a little leaning on them, a little acceleration in what we're doing, and carrying forward the political process in the South because I don't know of course but I suspect that what they may have decided is that if they're going to lose this, they'd rather withdraw silently and let the fellow in the South make any deal, rather than overtly get into negotiations with us and admit they lost the war. It may be something like that. In any case, our work's cut out for us, and we ought to line it up soon enough.

President: Do you think that this is urgent enough to have Rusk come back?⁴

Rostow: No, sir, I do not think it's that kind of a—I think he should be informed it's negative, and I don't think that we should react con-

² See Documents 81 and 82.

³ Henry Hall Wilson, Administrative Assistant to the President for Legal Liaison, was responsible for White House relations with the House of Representatives.

⁴ See footnote 3, Document 82.

vulsively, but I think that we've come to a stage, all this sort of fussing-about before Tet, I think that the truth probably is that their government is so split in Hanoi that the one position they could agree on is this no bombing for a possibility of talks, that all this talk of peace feelers and so on got them in trouble with the Chinese faction and they know they're terribly vulnerable . . .

President: You said in your memo that the State Department leaked this. I was told that Bobby's [Kennedy] boy Vanden Heuvel⁵ told the people back here and they leaked it. Where'd you get the State Department leaked to *Newsweek* that Bobby had a feeler?

Rostow: Wasn't that . . . didn't that . . . It's not my memo—it's Nick's.

President: Well, ask him who leaked it in the Department.

Rostow: Yes, I will. I have no knowledge . . .

President: Just tell him our information from a pretty good source was that it was Bobby's people leaked it. Ask him what he's got to dispute that. If our people did leak it, I want to see. I think it is outrageous to make it look like we got a feeler, because it shows that it affects Hanoi, doesn't it?

Rostow: That's right. I shall get back on that.

President: I got a letter from Dick [unintelligible word] last night saying that this fellow, this Frenchman that talked to Bobby, they got a good record on him.⁶

Rostow: Oh, I know that. He's been anti-U.S. and very much tied up with the left. He was out with—De Gaulle looked to him very much for the line he took in that speech at Phnom Penh, you'll remember, in Asia, in Cambodia. Well, sir, I'll be getting this up to you . . .

President: I think you ought to brief somebody on that, Walt. Give me a memo on Manac'h and his background, who he is and so forth, what he is and what—just so I'll have general knowledge of him.

Rostow: Shall do it, sir.

President: Now, does Nick think there's any truth in the *Washington Star* editorial—that we brought Bobby in and just murdered him and so forth?

Rostow: No. I think that what Nick feels is that Bobby felt very put upon, Bobby felt very put upon. Whether he thinks it's any—I don't think that he feels that he was treated badly, but Bobby got himself into trouble and he felt he was put into a very difficult position. The thing that I don't understand about Bobby is that suppose he did feel this

⁵ William J. Vanden Heuvel, a principal adviser to Senator Robert Kennedy.

⁶ See footnote 3, Document 38.

way—he's a big boy now, and he ought to know that when you go and talk to the President of the United States you don't go around to every dinner party belly-aching. He above anybody ought to know that's not the way this country runs, and . . .

President: But he was belly-aching to me. He's telling me everything is wrong in every country, and I just said, "Yes, sir," sat there and listened to him. Then he got in here and started getting up on my State Department, well I just had to tell him that it wasn't mine—he picked out the God-damn State Department that he was running with. I didn't pick them. I didn't select these folks that he was whoring around with. Now what else did we say besides that?

Rostow: One of the things that Noyes⁷ came back—he didn't print it, but he said it last night, remember, I put a footnote on—he said that Bobby was saying that the kind of thing that you thought he was saying was leading to fellows getting killed over there. I don't remember you saying that.

President: Not at all, not at all.

Rostow: I told him I didn't remember that. Well, I . . . he . . . I said to Noyes that "I cannot vouch for how Senator Robert Kennedy feels. I have a feeling that he feels the whole episode turned sour on him. But that was not because of anything that the President did or we did over here in general, but that the true story—the story leaked that he looked kind of foolish, and he's taking out the feeling that he got whipsawed on this by the events and blame it on you and that talk. But in any case, we cannot vouch for how Senator Kennedy feels, but we can ask them if there is a story of this kind to check both ends of it." He said, "That's fair," and he repeated that. He came back, he said, "Well, my reporter got it from the Senator," and I said, "Yeah, I gather he did. He's been talking to a lot of people. But did you call the President? Did you call Nick? Did you call me?" Answer: negative. All right. Check both sides. That's where that ended up.

President: Well, you see Mary McGrory⁸ just runs an advertising agency for Bobby.

Rostow: I see, yes, yes. He probably wept on her shoulder.

President: Oh yes, that's right, that's right. Okay, then, you get a hold of this, and get me an analysis of it, your interpretation, by the time I come over. And I'll get this letter over to you and you call Nick now and tell him we want to be prompt with these guys, and I think it's better to get them a letter before Congress gets back in. And I think we ought to consider what we do to investigate things. I think we ought

⁷ Crosby Noyes, a reporter for the *Washington Evening Star*.

⁸ Mary McGrory, a reporter for the *Washington Evening Star*.

to set up some kind of a board to look in to it or something. And I don't think they've done anything wrong, but I think it's bad for them to let somebody else do it. But I think all of that will come out if they have a Congressional committee. And they won't touch me because I haven't been connected with it. But I think Nick ought to know that we probably ought to try to set up some kind of a board like when we did when he had Allen Dulles⁹ and Bobby Kennedy and them study the Bay of Pigs thing. I don't know how we ever got by with having that "objective" group look at the Bay of Pigs.

Rostow: Brought back Max Taylor as the nearest thing to a fig leaf we could get.

President: You don't know when Rusk is coming back, do you? This is Wednesday, isn't it?

Rostow: It's Wednesday, sir.

President: I'm planning to leave tomorrow, so anything we need to do we ought to think about it.

Rostow: Well, I think that what ought to happen is that without you Nick and Bob [McNamara] and Cy [Vance] and the others and I should sort of take stock of where we are in Vietnam.

President: Now you think that what he says is, "We might talk if you quit bombing."¹⁰

Rostow: That is correct. That's exact. That's exactly how the French would say. It never was more lucid than seeing it in French because it uses the conditional—*pourrait*—might—it's not will, it's *pourrait*, which is conditional—*pourrait engager des conversations*.

President: All right. Now, is there anything else of note—note-worthy about it?

Rostow: No, sir. Its obvious these—this fellow's very sensitive to the notion that maybe he was talking while the bombing was on and we might use that against him with the Chinese and with the NLF. I mean, that comes through very clearly in this anxiety, and he's partly clearing the skids with everybody, but it's also perfectly clear he's not willing—he's just not willing to go beyond that. But I think that we ought to carefully analyze it, and then formulate what we're going to do, and then see if we can't accelerate some of these things in the South and maybe lean on the North, if you want to, and so on.

President: I want you to get your people to look at these targets a little more carefully. I think McNamara's listened to these folks very closely, and I think we ought to get every damn target we can that

⁹ Allen Dulles, Director of Central Intelligence, 1953–1961.

¹⁰ A quote from Ho Chi Minh's February 15 letter to the President; see Document 82.

hasn't got a lot of civilian people around it not right in Hanoi. Now all these electric plants . . .

Rostow: I think we ought to tick off one of those every 4 days or every once a week.

President: Well look at it and see what we can do about the civilians and let's see about it. And I want to get that steel mill and cement plant. I don't know why, but I'd like to have the other side of the argument—why are they important to get them? Are they held back because they're close to Hanoi?

Rostow: I think they're held back because, the point is, I think Bob feels that one—they wouldn't have much to do with the fighting in the South, two—they would raise a lot of diplomatic storm in the world for our hitting something that wasn't directly connected to the fighting, and three—I don't think the civilian casualty problem is very great with those two targets. A lot of people work in the plants, but I think that is not the primary point. The primary point Bob would make is one—they don't have much to do with the fighting in the South; two—you pay heavy political and psychological costs around the world. It's also true you'd pay pretty heavy political costs in the United States. But the boys in Hanoi, on the other hand, feel they can have those plants protected by their success in pressuring us psychologically in the rest of the world. But I think we want to take stock of the—there's another thing we have to think about, which is that the Viet Cong have been working that channel over pretty good, and they have some Russian mines in there, and we either ought to put some mines up there in that Haiphong or tell the Russians that they better get those fellows to lay off—we're sick of picking up Russian mines in the Saigon channel.

President: Now what are you saying—the Russians've been putting mines in the Saigon channel?

Rostow: Not the Russians, but Russian-manufactured mines are being put by the VC. We have two of them, and they've been working over that channel pretty well, and if they want to play that kind of game, we can play it better than they can. I just have a note—Bob Komer did a note on it to me and I've been following it.

President: And say to them, "If you don't quit putting mines in the Saigon channel, we're going to put them in Haiphong"?

Rostow: Correct. That's one thing we ought to consider. I'm not—I don't want to go off half-cocked on something like that. But I do think we are sobering down the whole agenda with things like that. The trend of attacks in merchant shipping has risen from 1 in '65, 2 in the first half of '66, 5 in the last half of '66, 3 in the first month of '67. VC are now using thousand-pound Soviet contact mines. And I think at the minimum that we ought to tell our friend Dobrynin that

"This is a game that two can play," or maybe we want to go lay a few of them and see what happens. But all I'm saying is, sir, that we ought to take all the things we might do in the North, make believe that we never heard of them before, and then do pros and cons on them.

President: Can't the South Vietnamese lay the mines in Haiphong?

Rostow: I don't know whether they could fly that kind of aircraft. We could find out.

President: Well, how'd the Viet Cong put theirs in?

Rostow: They do it with boats.

President: Well, can't the South Vietnamese do it the same way?

Rostow: Well, its kind of far to get up in a little boat.

President: I was just thinking that maybe we ought to tell him, "Now the South Vietnamese have been wanting to do this for some time and they're going to do it."

Rostow: That's a pretty good idea. We could get them the planes—that type. All right, sir. Got it.

President: I'm going to talk to Bob about this and the targets too. And those power plants we know would hurt them some. I think steel and cement ought to, and I think we ought to just take one at a time. I've already approved them. Now, what else is there that we got that we can do?

Rostow: Well, I don't know whether we could accelerate the barrier. I don't know whether that's technically possible. I think we ought to tell—I'd like to see—Westy has been running the war a little on a kind of a, how should I say, a safe, sort of "6%" basis. He's been pushing his fellows pretty hard, but running it fairly comfortably without sort of forcing the pace much, in a very sober and competent way. It's not the way it would be if he were in desperate straits. I think we ought to, without trying to be generals here, tell him that we'd like for the maximum the pace of operations to be really picked up against these VC bases. I think we really ought to get a burr under his saddle on accelerating pacification, both the ARVN side of it and our own thing. I think that we ought to try to get some roads open and stayed open. A sense of sort of urgency and hard drive of the kind that you had when you had a major war going on. Hell, out there MacArthur ran those operations with no landing craft, very economical, he strained to get every ounce of fighting power out of a limited supply situation. I'd like to see a little bit of that mood out there in South Vietnam because time is—the clock is—ticking on us. And then I'd like to see Ky get his village elections, and then talk to him, and from a position of confidence begin to try to reach out and grab and talk and cajole and buy out some of these fellows in the

South and ignore Hanoi for a while except to clobber them a little bit more. I just think . . .

President: You don't think Bob Murhpy'd¹¹ be any good as Ambassador?

Rostow: I think he's a little old, sir.

President: Well, I don't know, he was pretty active the other day and pretty alert.

Rostow: Yeah, yeah, that's an interesting thought. Max Taylor mentioned Frank Pace.¹² I don't have much feel for him.

President: Well, I think he's a pretty smart cookie. Max mention anybody else? Walt, let's have Max in on all these meetings.

Rostow: We will. I'm briefing him on the schedule.

President: I know it, but the other day I had to call him afterwards, and I think he's got awfully good judgment.

Rostow: I agree with you, sir.

President: So let's just when we have'em and when we're talking about Saigon ask me in the morning before the lunch if we want to have Max Taylor.

Rostow: Right, sir.

President: Okay.

¹¹ Robert Murphy, former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs until 1959 and an informal adviser to the President.

¹² Frank Pace, member of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board.

Debate Over Expansion of the War, February–May

84. Notes of Meeting With President Johnson¹

Washington, February 17, 1967.

PRESENT

The President
Secretary Robert McNamara
General Earle Wheeler
General Maxwell D. Taylor
Walt W. Rostow

General Wheeler presented the case for bombing the following:

- The steel and cement plants in North Viet Nam;
- The interconnected North Viet Nam grid supplying 138,000 kilowatts.

The exact location of these plants was discussed and the estimated level of civilian casualties. The objective of the bombing was to exert pressure on the North Vietnamese economy and on the will of the North Vietnamese government to persist in the conduct of the war. General Wheeler did not expect a major direct military effect from the attacks.

There was considerable discussion of the power plant at Hanoi containing about 20% of residual electric capacity. The estimate was that an attack would inflict 19 civilian casualties, 5 in the plant, 14 outside.

The President asked how many casualties in all would be inflicted by the proposed program. General Wheeler thought at the most between 2 and 300, including those engaged in the plants attacked. The basis for these estimates was examined, it being pointed out that they flowed from an estimate that 90% of the bombs would fall within 3

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Walt Rostow, Bombing. Top Secret. The meeting lasted from 12:25 to 2:04 p.m. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary) In a telephone conversation with the President on February 16, McNamara said that he and Wheeler would be able to meet with the President the next day in order "to review these bombing targets and evaluate the benefits of taking them out and perhaps propose a sequence of moves against them." The President tentatively agreed to the meeting. (Ibid., Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and McNamara, February 16, 1967, 11:32 a.m., Tape 67.06, Side B, PNO 4)

CEP (probable civilian error) from the center of the target. It was difficult to estimate the number of casualties from the 10% that would fall outside the 3 CEP.

The President suggested that we analyze our records and try to find out where this 10% fell.

In general, it was pointed out by General Wheeler and Sec. McNamara that the bulk of the civilian casualties were not caused by attacks in North Viet Nam on fixed targets but by intensive bombing of logistical routes via armed reconnaissance. Civil casualties consisted mainly of those engaged in military or military support activities, whether in uniform or not.

After going through each of the electric power plants, in turn, the steel plant was analyzed. As a steel plant, it is only 25% complete and the open hearth furnace is not yet operational. It does, however, engage in shaping POL drums, barges, and girders, all of which relate to the military supply structure. With respect to the cement plant, it was pointed out that it produced materials directly relevant to the maintenance of the military supply structure and its destruction would throw heavy additional burden on the transport system.

General Wheeler again pointed out, in response to a question from the President, that taking out the whole electric power system would be a severe blow to the industrial capability and the will of the North to persist in the war; and that the capacity of the ports would be indirectly affected in a significant way.

General Wheeler also raised the question of cutting back the present 10-mile circle around Haiphong to 4 miles to permit aircraft to attack not ships but lighters offloading the ships.

When asked his views by the President, General Taylor said that it was timely to expand the air attack on the North. He recommended that all targets outside built-up urban areas be cleared for attack. General Wheeler then raised the question of attacking the mile-long railroad bridge linking Hanoi to the northeast and northwest, as well as certain major ammunition depots which have hitherto not been attacked because of their proximity to civilian areas.

Sec. McNamara then spoke, emphasizing he did not believe these attacks would affect the net flow of supplies into the South. The logistical capacity of the North was well beyond infiltration requirements. Air attacks actually required to reduce the flow of men and supplies to the South would have to include the following:

- Attack on cement plant;
- Mining of the harbors;
- The destruction of the dikes which would throw a burden of importing and distributing an extra million tons of rice;
- The mining of inland waterways;

—Expanded transport attacks, including attack on the Hanoi bridge.²

General Taylor expressed the view that the most effective military form of attack would be mining of Haiphong harbor; the key question, of course, was what the Soviet reaction would be and the effect on Hanoi's dependence upon Communist China.

Sec. McNamara pointed out and underlined that we simply could not foresee the results of mining the Haiphong harbor; but we did know that this might push certain moderates on Viet Nam (e.g., Javits, Romney), into opposition. He said that if the President recommended attack on the power system, we should go all out and take out the whole system in as short a time as possible.

The President then asked for an evaluation of our attacks on POL. Sec. McNamara said there was no obvious net reduction in consumption; imports remained at about the same level; we had destroyed certain supplies; but they had successfully dispersed their stocks and evaded the loss of storage capacity by using barges to transship into dispersed storage points.

General Wheeler said that we had managed to disrupt the POL distribution system and impose strain and inconvenience, although we had not destroyed the petroleum base for their operations.

Sec. McNamara proposed one additional area which the President should consider, which is to expand our operations of surveillance and interdiction along the Laos trails. In this he would recommend that the President support Westmoreland's strong recommendation for an expansion in these trail watching and interdiction activities.

The President said that he wished Sec. McNamara, General Wheeler, Under Sec. Katzenbach to come together on agreed recom-

² At a February 24 press conference, McNamara discussed the U.S. program of bombing in Vietnam. He described the objective of the bombing campaign as being the right of the South Vietnamese to self-determination without "pressure from external powers." The bombardment of North Vietnam would bring about the achievement of this objective in three ways: 1) It would raise South Vietnamese morale. 2) It could be used "to either reduce the level of infiltration of men and equipment from North to South or to increase the cost of that infiltration." He underscored the fact that the bombing of the North was only a "supplement" to the war against the Viet Cong insurgents in South Vietnam. 3) The bombing would "make clear to the political leaders of the North that they would pay a price so long as they continued to carry on in their aggression of the South." He labeled the bombing program as "successful" in terms of achieving its objectives and pointed out that the bombardment would cease when the leaders in Hanoi agreed to a reciprocal de-escalation of military actions. For full text of the news conference, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1967*, pp. 861–863.

mendations, to be available by Wednesday, February 22.³ He would like to see all the alternatives laid before him with respect to accelerating the effort in the North, with the probable consequences of adopting each course.

With respect to the South, the President said he wanted every possibility for accelerating action in the South explored and recommendations made: more personnel, if necessary; more initiatives; more aggressiveness; additional efforts in Laos. Our Viet Nam policy was operating on borrowed time. We are confronted with an all-out psychological war against us by the Communists, which is making headway and eroding the political base in the U.S. We had been at this job in Viet Nam for 3 years. As the coach, he needed to get results. We had to solidify our support in the country by doing more militarily. In the country the support for more vigorous military action is at least 3–1, even if the war should get rougher and we face serious consequences. The President leaned to that side. We must get an agreed program and carry it forward in the next 9 months with maximum efficiency and with everything we have. We have probed for talks and found nothing substantial. Now we must act strongly.

The President then instructed that we take special measures to explain our bombing policy. The opposition has a strong hold on several of the networks and key newspapers. We must make our case and put to the country the central proposition: we shall back our men in the field.

W. W. Rostow⁴

³ At a February 22 luncheon with the President, Rusk, Wheeler, and McNamara recommended an expansion of mining and naval bombardment up to the 20th parallel, increased artillery barrages into the DMZ and Laos, the extension of Shining Brass interdiction patrols further into Laos, continued weather manipulation and force build-up, as well as specific bombing targets in North Vietnam. Notes of the meeting have not been found. These recommendations were restated in a memorandum from Bromley Smith to President Johnson, February 22. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXVI) Presumably during the luncheon, the President approved an intensified yet still limited strike program for RT 54 attacks in Route Package VI (the Hanoi–Haiphong area) and an extension of Sea Dragon authority. The targets included several thermal power plants and the iron and steel works at Thai Nguyen.

⁴ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

85. Telegram From the Embassy in the Soviet Union to the Department of State¹

Moscow, February 18, 1967, 1737Z.

3562. Subject: February 18 call on Kosygin—Vietnam.

1. I broached Vietnam by saying we deeply disappointed with latest developments. We did not know why other side had responded in such a manner. As Kosygin probably knew, we had had a very direct and negative reply to what we believed was reasonable proposal. We did not know if other side had been serious in starting discussions in first place. Perhaps North Vietnam was under pressure from Chinese, or perhaps it felt that under pressure of criticism from different quarters, including some quarters in US, we would quit. In any event, people in Washington were pleased to see indication that USSR also wanted to see problem settled. I said I did not know where we should go from here. As Kosygin knew we had shown great restraint: our policy was not to destroy North Vietnam, and we had also restricted our bombings to exclude ten mile area of Hanoi. However there had been no similar response from other side. Yet, as President had said, door to negotiations remains open and we ready discuss political settlement at any time.

2. I then pointed out that during a 4 or 5 day Tet holiday an estimated 25,000 tons of supplies had been sent southward, i.e., as many supplies had been shipped in 4 or 5 days as normally had been sent in a month. Thus we wondered what the purpose of this exercise was.² I also noted that from earlier discussions and from statements by other side we had understood that question was not only that of bombings, but also that if they stopped infiltration we would have to stop our reinforcements. We had made it clear that we would accept that. I said that if Kosygin had any suggestion about any further step, or any other comments, I would be glad to transmit them to my government.

3. Kosygin said he wished make it clear he not authorized negotiate for North Vietnam and therefore could not say his remarks would represent Vietnamese point of view. He did not wish to mislead us. However, he could state his own views. His estimate of latest events

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER. Top Secret; Immediate; Nodis; Sunflower Plus. Received at 4:08 p.m.

² Thompson informed the Department that he planned to cite specifically the stepped-up North Vietnamese infiltration as the reason for the change in the formula sent through the British because Kosygin's interpreter remarked to him the night before: "That was quite a switch you pulled on us in the text of your proposal." (Telegram 3533 from Moscow, February 17; *ibid.*, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER)

was as follows: Vietnamese had for first time stated they ready negotiate if bombings were stopped unconditionally; this was first time they had done so and it was a public statement. When he came to England, he supported this proposal publicly. He did it because he had good reason for taking such a step. Although he believed that mediators in this situation either complicated the problem or merely pretended they doing something, he took that step because he had seen a basis for US-Vietnamese talks. Wilson had been in touch with Washington but not on his, Kosygin's, initiative. However, Wilson kept him informed and he was in touch with Hanoi. Then came latest message, which had nature of ultimatum. It said that if by such and such time, i.e., 10 o'clock, Hanoi failed to do certain things, bombings would resume. Time given to Hanoi was very short—just a few hours—and situation was even more complicated because of time difference between London and Hanoi. Thus there was no opportunity for Hanoi to consider message and conduct necessary consultations. In fact, US received Ho Chi Minh's reply after bombing had already resumed. Kosygin continued that in his view US had made basic mistake. First, nothing would have happened if US had delayed bombings another three or four days. Second, US had couched its message in terms of an ultimatum. Third, US talked about 25,000 tons going to South—nature of which he did not know—but US said nothing about its own reinforcements. During that period US had sent additional troops, had moved its naval vessels to North Vietnamese shores, and had increased number its aircraft carriers in area from three to five. US accusing other side of having sent in 25,000 tons but US itself probably sent as much as 100,000 tons. In other words, US seems believe its infiltration is all right but infiltration by other side is not. Thus other side has no confidence in US intentions. Moreover, US seems discount China, which grave error. China wants continuation and expansion of conflict. In this connection, he wished point out that his remarks in London that negotiations should take place had provoked fury in China. This was another proof of his step having been a deliberate and responsible one. Yet what he received from US was message that bombings would be resumed if something wasn't done by 10 o'clock. If US wanted to conduct bombings it was of course its own decision. Kosygin then said that he had also advanced that thought that infiltration by both sides should cease. He repeated that he did not understand how US could object to infiltration from North while continuing its own infiltration. After all, Vietnam was one country and Vietnamese were one people, whereas US infiltration was of interventionist character.

4. After reiterating that he not authorized represent Vietnamese views and that his remarks reflected only Soviet views, Kosygin said

Soviets not confident US proposal had been very serious.³ Confidence was most important in this situation. While it perhaps inadvisable to rake up history, he wished recall that he, Chairman of USSR Council of Ministers, had been in Hanoi when US started bombings.⁴ Why did not US turn to him at that time and explain to him its problems? Another example of this need for confidence was fact that despite fact US and USSR had reached understanding to reduce their military expenditures US raised its budget without informing USSR. As for USSR, it kept its word; in any event, if it had deemed necessary to take certain steps it would have informed other side.

5. Kosygin continued that if statement by DRV Foreign Minister had opened possibilities for talks, those possibilities had been rudely disrupted by latest US step. Soviets did not know reasons for this US action, although I had mentioned some. Perhaps we had a situation here where policy was one thing and statements another. In any event, some forces were playing with fire in that area. Chinese want extension of war, and this is why they reacted the way they did to his statement in London. US was helping those forces by its actions; US left USSR open vis-à-vis China, it also left North Vietnam open vis-à-vis China. Net result is that Chinese view has triumphed, and Chinese can now say that all those efforts were nothing but a masquerade.⁵ Thus

³ In telegram 139631 to Moscow, February 17, Bundy reported that he had seen Zinchuk prior to this Thompson–Kosygin talk. From the discussion, Bundy had determined that the North Vietnamese had already briefed the Soviets on their reply to Johnson's first letter, which stated that the North Vietnamese "simply could not talk in any fashion as long as the bombing was not stopped." The Soviets still had credibility with the DRV leadership, which was important since the North Vietnamese still desired "to deal with and through the Soviets." However, with the "present action" on the heels of the pre-emptive bombings that ended the initiative in Warsaw the previous December, the Soviets now wondered "whether it had become the basic U.S. view that the military situation was steadily improving from our standpoint and that we therefore did not really want negotiations at the present time in the belief that the situation had become steadily more favorable to us." (Ibid.) Over 2 weeks later, Under Secretary of State Eugene Rostow confirmed this lingering pessimistic opinion among the Soviets. In a March 3 conversation among Ambassador Dobrynin, Ambassador at Large Harriman, and Rostow, Dobrynin asserted that there was a widespread belief that the administration did not want negotiations in the near future so that it "could pursue a military solution." (Memorandum of conversation, March 3; *ibid.*)

⁴ Kosygin was on a State visit to the DRV when President Johnson ordered the initiation of the Rolling Thunder bombing program on February 13, 1965.

⁵ Soviet officials expressed special concerns about the U.S. actions that would move North Vietnam further under the influence of China. As reported in telegram 140351 to Moscow, February 19, Zinchuk raised the specter of secret Washington–Peking contacts in the discussion with Bundy. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER) In telegram 3570 from Moscow, February 20, Thompson reported evidence of a special concern over U.S.–Chinese contacts in Warsaw. (Ibid.) The previous day, in telegram 3568 from Moscow, Thompson also reported that mining Haiphong would cause an extreme reaction in Moscow. (Ibid.) In a February 21 conversation with British official Michael Stewart, Kohler attributed Soviet involvement in the Sunflower episode not only to Wilson's actions but also to the

problem was now to find way toward unconditional cessation of bombings so as to start negotiations. He wished to stress, however, that question was only of direct US-North Vietnam contact, for North Vietnam's prestige was involved here. In addition, he wanted to say frankly that no third party must seek gain advantage from its activities in this situation; much more important thing was at stake here, i.e., search for peaceful settlement. As to how to proceed further, he did not know. Road he had conceived of had been disrupted by US ultimatum. Chinese now very happy for they seek increased tension and hope for US-Soviet confrontation. US assisting them and this alarming to USSR. Kosygin said he could not venture to propose anything constructive now. He had no basis for doing so and he did not wish to make unrealistic propositions. He had spoken very frankly with me—as he would not have spoken with anyone else—because he knew that I would transmit his views only to President.

5. [sic] After thanking Kosygin for his comments, I said I wished to make a few remarks of my own. I said I did not believe it justified compare other side's infiltration with sending of our own reinforcements. For one thing, we were in South Vietnam at request SVN Govt. Moreover, our bombings were for purpose of impeding North Vietnamese supplies to South, whereas North Vietnamese could not stop our own supplies. Thus stopping of our bombings gave advantage to North Vietnamese.

6. Kosygin interjected that this interesting reasoning. After all, NLF—which certainly more solid organization than US puppets in Saigon and which controlled three fourths of SVN territory—also asking North Vietnam for support.

7. I continued we had told North Vietnam that if they stopped infiltration we would stop our reinforcements. Important point here was that North Vietnam should not gain any advantage.

8. Kosygin again interrupted by asserting US was talking from position of strength.

9. Referring to general question of cessation of bombings, I said our position had been clear and I did not think there was need to dwell on it in detail. US always prepared to stop bombings if such cessation would not result in improvement NVN position; in other words, if infiltration from North stopped we would also stop our reinforcements. I continued that in their reply North Vietnamese had advanced again demand that we accept their Four Points and recognize NLF as gen-

"profound fear and hostility all Russians feel towards China." (Ibid.) Perhaps, as the Ambassador suggested in telegram 3622 from Moscow, February 23, Kosygin had not mentioned the necessity for American troop withdrawals from Vietnam because of the Chinese expansionist threat to Southeast Asia. (Ibid.)

uine representative of SVN, etc., which tantamount to demand for our complete capitulation. This connection, I said we could not accept view that Vietnam one country and regarded Vietnam as consisting of two separate countries. Kosygin said he knew that our positions on this point were different.

10. I agreed that Chinese wanted exploit situation and wished US-Soviet confrontation. I also agreed that direct US-NVN talks would be desirable, although we would accept any other method of negotiations, such as through third parties or at a conference. As to question of prestige, we did not believe it should be important factor. For instance, if North Vietnam not prepared say they had sent troops to South, that would be all right with US. This was why we had not asked them to make any public statement on subject. Main problem was to stop conflict.

11. I said I understood that Kosygin was not in position to negotiate, but wished nevertheless reiterate we wanted settlement. On other hand, while I did not know what further decisions US would take and did not want to make any misleading statements, I thought that if in face certain US steps, such as restriction of bombings around Hanoi, other side continues killing people, including Americans, in South, US would feel free take any action necessary to stop infiltration. For our part, we had made main step in advance of any settlement in stating that, despite all the money we had spent in South Vietnam on construction of bases, etc., we would withdraw from South Vietnam. I said my govt was grateful for Kosygin's actions, including those he had taken while in London, to see this problem settled.

12. After reiterating he not representing North Vietnam, Kosygin said US must realize its bombings, defoliation, operations, etc., not successful. Thus US must look for constructive steps. US must realize North Vietnam between hammer and anvil. It must look forward and also look back, for Chinese want to heat up situation. This was why he had made his statement in London. In fact, he could tell me that even earlier USSR had sought a political settlement. China, which strictly nationalistic, has expansionist aspirations in Asia, including such countries as India, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, etc. Thus US must keep this in mind—it must take account of these sharp corners in international situation. He continued that he knew that objectively we would agree there was no Saigon govt, even though we would of course never admit that. Saigon regime was sitting on island surrounded by sea of civil war. Its situation could be compared to that of Kolchak or Denikin during Russian civil war. Also, it could be compared to position of Archangel govt, against which he himself had fought. US, as well as others, had sought to make use of those governments but all that ended in failure. Now US administers oxygen to Saigon regime. Of course one could sustain life by oxygen but he did

not know for how long, as he no physician. But even if US were to fight another five years, what would situation be then. Vietnamese would still be there for no one could expect them to leave their country. Consequently, settlement must be sought earlier rather than later. Of course, there was internal dissent in US over this problem, there were Goldwaters and Nixons in US, but he was confident that they would not be supported by US people if a settlement were reached. He said he wished repeat that what should be looked for were constructive steps, certainly not ultimata: US should not send messages stating that something should be done by 10 o'clock for it would receive reply that would make it necessary start all over again. In sum, he felt situation not simple.

13. I said that as Kosygin probably knew, we had given North Vietnamese our suggestions as to what could be discussed and we had also told them in advance we would be prepared continue Tet suspension of bombing. Thus, there no question of any last-minute actions on our part. As to South Vietnam Govt, I pointed out that they were developing new Constitution and would have elections, and that we were prepared let South Vietnamese people decide what they want.

14. Kosygin said that in concluding our discussion on Vietnam, he wished to stress that USSR favored political rather than military solution. He emphasized, however, that this statement was strictly private and not for publication. I assured him that I fully understood. Referring again to message he had transmitted to Hanoi from London, he said he knew it was hopeless the minute he had read it.

15. As Kosygin indicated he wished break off discussion on Vietnam, I raised another subject, leased line for our Embassy. However, after my initial remarks on this subject, Kosygin apologized and said he wished ask me a question relating to Vietnam. He then asked me directly if Chinese had approached us re possibility of negotiations on Vietnam. When I said that to best of my knowledge they had not, he asked me if I was absolutely certain, noting that perhaps there were channels with which I not familiar. I told him I had seen all reports of our conversations with Chinese in Warsaw and could tell him that they did not amount to anything; they consisted essentially of constant Chinese accusations of US for helping Taiwan, having aggressive designs, etc.

16. Discussion then turned to leased line (septel).

Thompson

86. Letter From the Ambassador to Vietnam (Lodge) to President Johnson¹

Saigon, February 19, 1967.

Dear Mr. President:

Herewith I submit my resignation as Ambassador to Viet-Nam—which I do entirely for personal and private reasons.

Indeed, I wish specifically to thank you for the privilege of carrying out a policy which I believe to be profoundly right and which has already achieved great things.

One way to measure these achievements is to note the things which once worried us and which worry us no more. For example, we used to worry that the enemy would cut Viet-Nam in two along highway 19; or that the aggressor would establish an enemy capital in some provincial city from which we could not extricate him; or that a Viet Cong coup would take over the Government by subversion; or that inflation would cause famine; or that there would never be even a breathing spell in an unending wave of governmental instability. In particular, we worried that the loss of Viet-Nam would so encourage the aggressor that he would move against other nations of East Asia—in which case the immediate threat of World War III would be staring us in the face.

Today, the large enemy units are so split up and off balance that they cannot divide the country or occupy any one point both day and night. Viet-Nam moves towards constitutional government. Economic and social programs continue. Runaway inflation has been staved off. Still to be accomplished, however, is the destruction of the terrorist organization which continues to assassinate, kidnap, torture and sabotage—and to impress young males into the Viet Cong. While thus a satisfactory outcome has not yet been achieved, it is clear that even terrorism cannot hold out forever and that persistence will ward off aggression. They cannot win and we cannot be pushed out.

Outside of Viet-Nam that whole great area of islands and peninsulas constituting the edge of East Asia, going from Korea south, then west to Burma, and southeast to New Zealand (and containing 370 million people) is denied to the expansionism of Peking. To be sure, the

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Office of the President File, Henry Cabot Lodge. Top Secret; Eyes Only. The first two and the last paragraphs, along with the salutation and complimentary close, are handwritten by Lodge. He sent this letter along with a handwritten letter of resignation to Rusk. He informed Rusk that he would leave on April 3, after the promulgation of the South Vietnamese Constitution on March 27, and that he was letting him know now in order to provide sufficient time to name a successor. (Ibid.)

current situation is dangerous because the world is dangerous, but if we had been pushed out of Viet-Nam or if we had abandoned Viet-Nam, the tide would have turned towards Peking and a catastrophe of global dimension would have ensued. This would have involved us in a far more acute danger. Thus your policies, looked at in their most fundamental sense, actually tend away from escalation and towards peace, even though the other side is not yet ready for negotiations.

All these solid achievements would not have occurred without your farsighted and brave decision, in the summer of 1965, to make limited use of our military power, in addition to our civilian aid, to help the all-out Vietnamese effort to ward off the aggression and protect the independence of their revolution. In so doing, we also fight directly for our own vital national interest.

As I finish three and a half years of complete involvement in United States policy toward Viet-Nam, both as Ambassador and as consultant, I wish to thank you for your unfailing support and for the honor conferred on me by your trust.²

With respectful regard

Faithfully yours

Henry Cabot Lodge

² On March 1 Komer wrote to Lodge: "The President mentioned your latest letter. As you know, ever since you gave me your confidence and confided your own preferences many months ago, I've been keeping an eye out for them. The great problem has been finding someone who could even come close to filling your shoes. But you will bequeath any successor a legacy of accelerating success. More and more I sense that 1966 was the decisive year." (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Komer Files: Lot 69 D 303, Vietnam/Turkey)

87. Memorandum From the President's Special Consultant
(Taylor) to President Johnson¹

Washington, February 20, 1967.

SUBJECT

Possible Forms of Negotiation with Hanoi

Walt Rostow recently made available to me his memorandum to you of November 17, 1966 on the above subject (I attach herewith a copy of his paper).² He has made a very important point, I believe, in concluding that, in any negotiation, we need to seek agreement on an end position and then work back to agreement on a cease-fire.

I have always been impressed with the difficulties of negotiating a satisfactory cease-fire which will really stop the shooting and, at the same time, avoid giving the enemy a respite for refitting and retraining for a bigger and better war. Such a cease-fire would have to include bringing a halt to our bombing of North Viet-Nam and to all breaches of the peace in South Viet-Nam, including the "Big War" (the war against the units of the Viet Cong Main Forces and of the North Vietnamese Army), the "Little War" (the activities of the local guerrillas) and the "Criminal War" (the activities of the terrorists and saboteurs). If the cease-fire is to be in effect for any significant duration prior to reaching a total settlement of the situation, it should also include a verifiable agreement whereby the enemy ceases the infiltration of reinforcements in exchange for our freezing of force levels.

Clearly, to negotiate such a cease-fire would be very difficult; to fail to cover all the elements mentioned would expose us to the possibility of a Panmunjom-type stalemate in the negotiation of the remaining steps required for a normalization of relations and an enduring peace. The latter steps would include such things as the dissolution of the Viet Cong organization, the disposition of the remaining guerrillas and the withdrawal of foreign troops (I mean here the U.S. and Free World Forces and the North Vietnamese forces and cadres infiltrated from North Viet-Nam).

For the purposes of this discussion, I am going to refer to the package of measures necessary for a cease-fire as Package A and the remaining measures for normalization as Package B. We could conceive of negoti-

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Gen. Taylor (2 of 2). Top Secret. At the request of the President, Rostow distributed Taylor's memorandum to Rusk, McNamara, and Wheeler the next day. (Memorandum from Rostow to Rusk, McNamara, and Wheeler, February 21; *ibid.*)

² Printed in *Foreign Relations, 1964–1968*, vol. IV, Document 313.

ating the totality of issues of A plus B in three ways or cases. Case I would be to negotiate A and B separately in that order. Case II would be the simultaneous negotiation of A and B. Case III would be the negotiation of B and A separately in that order. The question to decide is which of these cases is the most advantageous from our point of view.

In evaluating them, there are several points which have to be taken into account. Without suggesting an order of priority, they include the following:

a. To prevent a Panmunjom, we must either keep the military pressure on during the negotiations or set tight deadlines for getting results at the negotiating table.

b. South Viet-Nam should always retain the right to exercise its police powers in maintaining law and order and protecting Vietnamese citizens outside of the areas under Viet Cong control.

c. The infiltration from the North, the withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces and cadres, and the dissolution of the Viet Cong are actions difficult to verify in the short run. On the other hand, the bombing of the North and the military, paramilitary and criminal activities in the South can be verified in a general way and can even be statistically tabulated.

d. Based upon the experience of several truces, it is doubtful whether a complete cease-fire in South Viet-Nam will be possible prior to the completion of the actions of Package B. Experience suggests that breaches are inevitable.

e. It is uncertain how long the Main Force Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese units can subsist without supplies from North Viet-Nam and without molesting the local population. It is probable that the local guerrillas must live off the population although local accumulation of stocks may give them a limited capability of self-maintenance.

With these points in mind, now let us consider the pros and cons of the three cases.³

Case I

Case I, if successful, would bring a quick end to the fighting and a sharp reduction of tensions in Viet-Nam and elsewhere. However, it would probably create a sense of euphoria on our side and a feeling that peace is at hand. It would open the possibility of a drawn out ne-

³ Taylor outlined the cases in an attachment, "Negotiating Sequence Alternatives," in the form of annotated charts. In Case I, the cease-fire would precede the "measures for normalization," which, while ending the fighting, could result in protracted negotiations that would benefit the enemy. Case II involved a simultaneous cease-fire and normalization that would be complicated and make any necessary resumption of military pressure difficult. In Case III, the normalization occurred before the cease-fire, thereby causing a situation wherein tension continued to remain high. Case IV consisted of a slow, deliberate de-escalation of the war but without any formal agreement on the termination of hostilities. The attachment is not printed.

gotiation of B which would give the enemy the opportunity to refit and prepare for a longer war. As indicated above, it would probably be impossible to avoid violations of the cease-fire, intentional or accidental. Finally, it would be impossible to negotiate the B Package quietly since the whole world would know that negotiations were in process and our side at least would soon be under pressure to report progress and to soften tough negotiating positions to expedite results.

Case II

Case II would avoid most of the cons of Case I and, if successful, would settle everything in a single operation. The difficulty is that such a negotiation would be highly complex and time-consuming. It is doubtful that it could be kept secret and, if revealed, would expose our side to the pressures mentioned under the cons of Case I. We could count on a major effort at home and abroad to get us to stop the bombing during such negotiations and perhaps to reduce all military activity to the levels of a *de facto* cease-fire in order to reduce loss of life with peace just around the corner.

Case III

Case III would avoid most of the cons of Case I and has the great advantage of showing each participant how he would come out in the end. Hence, if agreement is reached on B, there should be little difficulty in obtaining agreement on A and little inducement for further stalling. Secrecy should be possible during the negotiation of B and military pressure would be maintained until agreement on A.

It is clear from the foregoing that Case III appears to be by far the most advantageous from our point of view. For success, it requires, first, a carefully prepared negotiating position on our side, then a secret, solid negotiating contact with Hanoi. Our preparations would require an understanding as to the "carrots" which we are prepared to offer for the dissolution of the Viet Cong and disposition of Viet Cong personnel. Such "carrots" might include an amnesty and civil rights for the Viet Cong guaranteed by the GVN and the U.S., the assurance of participation by Viet Cong in political life, economic assistance to aid the ralliers, and the right of honorable repatriation to those who prefer to go north of the 17th parallel. We would also need a position on the phased and verified withdrawal of foreign troops and the kinds of verification procedures which we would consider acceptable to assure ourselves that infiltration had ceased and withdrawal had been completed. We need to make up our own minds on these points well before sitting down at a conference table with our opponents.

For completeness, I might have added consideration of a Case IV, the subsidence termination without formal negotiations. Under certain

conditions, it might compete in desirability with Case III. It avoids the requirement for formal negotiations and agreements. It avoids the disadvantages attendant upon the presence of kibitzers and advisors behind the chairs of our negotiators. It permits slow and cautious de-escalation with minimum risks.

On the other hand, there would always be the problem of verifying the threat really had subsided and did not remain latent for an indefinite period in the jungles of South Viet-Nam and in the sanctuaries of Laos and Cambodia. There would always be an uncertainty about the termination of hostilities which could neither be verified, guaranteed or made the subject of public commitments by the adversaries.

A hybrid Case III/Case IV is conceivable which would be partly negotiated, partly tacit—a blend of the negotiation and subsidence approach. As a starter, the field commanders of ARVN and of the VC/NVA forces, following the armistice pattern in 1954, could negotiate a military agreement covering the disposition of the Viet Cong and the “carrots” to be given them. If this succeeded, we could then accept a cease-fire to create the conditions necessary for the carrying out of the agreement. If this appeared successful, we could then freeze our forces and secretly inform Hanoi of the fact with the suggestion that they do likewise. After receiving evidence that infiltration was subsiding, we could then progressively decrease bombing of the North, adjusting it to the behavior of the other side.

If all violence subsided and the Viet Cong resettlement proceeded in accordance with plan, then we could consider a slow withdrawal of forces, watching for corresponding actions by Hanoi.

From this analysis, I come out with the following priority of desirability in negotiation forms:

- Priority 1 Case III, IV or hybrid III/IV
- Priority 2 Case II
- Priority 3 Case I

Maxwell D. Taylor

88. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, February 20, 1967.

Mr. President:

I have reflected over the week-end on where we are in Viet Nam and where we ought to go. I forward these thoughts now because I won't be here for the Wednesday meeting.²

Here, bare-boned, are my conclusions and order of priority.

1. *Keep pouring it on in the South.* Nothing is better than the kind of successful operations we have had in the past few days—notably the good and (at last) well-publicized operations of the South Vietnamese. Westy must stretch his capabilities and, even, take risks to keep forward momentum. The most fundamental Communist question affecting their policy judgments is: "What is the situation on the ground?"

2. *Pacification and Opening of Roads.* This is where we must be able to show real obvious progress in the next 3–6 months. We'll have to await Bob Komer's return before knowing how to get a handle on it.

3. *Bombing the North.* As you know, I am for applying more weight. I won't go into detail here, but I believe it should be applied step-by-step, not convulsively. They should feel in Hanoi the sheriff is coming steadily down the road for them, not that we are in a spasm of anxiety or desperation.

4. *The Russians.* We should keep in steady frank conversation with them—here as well as Moscow. Apparently, Tommy did not make crystal clear that we no longer feel bound by the 10-mile circle. That should now be done by Nick or by me. We should tell them that we are not talking with the Chinese beyond Warsaw (which they monitor). We should tell them politely that since they can't deliver Hanoi on a sensible deal, we'll have to do it; although all channels remain open.

5. *Negotiations.* We should stop projecting an atmosphere of great anxiety about negotiations to Hanoi—a kind of "you call me" posture is about right.

6. *Politics in South Viet Nam.* This is the sleeper for 1967 if it comes out right. The critical issue is increasingly this: Westy and Lodge should

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Memos to the President, Walt Rostow, Vol. 21. Top Secret. The President wrote at the top of the page: "Put it on my desk for Wed. L."

² Present for the February 22 meeting were the President, Eugene Rostow, McNamara, Taylor, Wheeler, Smith, and Christian. It ran 1:15 p.m. to 3:25 p.m. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary) No notes of the meeting have been found.

take Thieu up on a mountain and let him see what a grand role he could play if he took over the Vietnamese military and modernized them for the long pull while keeping unity and backing the constitutional process. Ky looks to me the more likely politician for the next phase; but it may matter that Thieu know he will have all kinds of U.S. support if he undertakes the critical backstop military job. This conversation can wait until Bob Komer gives us his picture of the lay of the land.³

When the Ky–Thieu matter is settled—and the sooner the better—then we can really go to work to encourage them to organize solidly a military-civil coalition; a national program; a consolidation of political parties into a great big national party; an election with maximum turnout; a forthcoming amnesty position; and all the rest.

Because it doesn't involve hardware and much money, this is the dimension we tend to neglect; but doing it well may make all the difference to whether we get a settlement this year.

Walt

³ For Komer's report, see Document 91.

89. Memorandum for the 303 Committee¹

Washington, February 27, 1967.

SUBJECT

Status Report on Covert Operations in Support of Veterans, Labor, Youth, and Students and Information Media in Vietnam

1. Summary

In the veterans field, our work consists of an on-going program of covert support and financial assistance [less than 1 line of source text not declassified] in training organizers at the provincial, district and village levels with the object of forming Vietnamese veterans into a non-governmental channel of communication between the central government and local areas. The subsidy also provides for maintaining the [less than 1 line of source text not declassified] headquarters staff in Saigon.

¹ Source: National Security Council, Records of the 303 Committee, Vietnam, 1965–1969. Secret; Eyes Only. No drafting information appears on the memorandum. At the bottom of the first page is the handwritten note: "Noted by 303 Committee principals on 7 April 1967."

In the labor field, we provide covert financial assistance and advice to the Vietnamese trade union movement through the Vietnamese Confederation of Trade Unions (CVT). In addition to supporting the national headquarters of CVT in Saigon, we support organizers who provide the connective tissue between Saigon and the CVT's provincial and district councils. We also direct support to the [less than 1 line of source text not declassified] which provides us unique access to the small holder who works his own land.

In the youth and student field, our efforts have been devoted to channeling the energies of youth and students into constructive lines in support of the war effort and away from destructive dissent and political agitation. Because of the diffuse target, we have been forced to work through a variety of organizations such as [3 lines of source text not declassified]. CIA funding of [less than 1 line of source text not declassified] internationally was recently compromised. However, there had been no direct use of [less than 1 line of source text not declassified] in Saigon since June 1966. Our activities in this area range from financial support to the [less than 1 line of source text not declassified] monthly magazine, to an as-yet unrealized program of providing provincial youth hostels for high school students from outlying areas.

In the domestic media field, we continue to use seven separate agents to influence local public opinion through the planting of information and articles in the vernacular press.

The foregoing activities were reviewed and approved initially by Deputy Ambassador Johnson in April 1965 as implementation of the actions listed in the 12-point CIA Action Program, NSAM #328.²

In the field of political party work, we provide a small monthly subsidy to a ranking official of the Revolutionary Dai Viet Party to permit expanded circulation of the Party's monthly theoretical journal. This subsidy is provided on condition that the journal will emphasize the importance of overt party activity as contrasted to the Dai Viet traditional clandestine modus operandi.

2. Coordination

Currently, coordination in the field is effected through the political minister-counselor who is kept informed on developments. In Washington coordination is maintained with Assistant Secretary Bundy and other appropriate officers of the Bureau of East Asian Affairs. The most recent authority for these programs is contained in the 12 point CIA Action Program, approved by NSAM 328, 6 April 1965. Predecessor activities were a part of the Covert Annex to the Vietnam task force Action Program endorsed by the Special Group in June 1961.

² For text of NSAM No. 328, April 6, 1965, see *Foreign Relations, 1964–1968*, vol. II, Document 242.

3. Review of Effectiveness and Accomplishments of Operations

As noted above, the requirements for these programs stemmed from NSAM 328 and earlier approvals of CIA station programs [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*]. Previous developments were reviewed in the Status Reports of the 12 point program until these reports were discontinued in August 1965.

[1 paragraph (15 lines of source text) not declassified]

In the labor field, we have worked in much the same fashion, providing the means whereby the Confederation of Vietnamese Trade Union (300,000 members) is capable of maintaining its position as a responsible and independent spokesman for Vietnamese labor in its dealings with the central government. Although not as badly tainted by the Diem era, the CVT faces considerable domestic opposition from management, splinter union groups envious of its dominant position, and occasionally the government which is uncertain as to whether it wants to tolerate the existence of an uncontrolled power center. More recently, we have concentrated significant support on the revitalization of [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*], again a remnant of the Diem era which had been stifled by government control and direction, but which offers the only non-government means of reaching the agricultural small holder and persuading him that he has a stake in the future of Vietnam.

In the youth and student field, we have made less headway, partly because of the many different Vietnamese organizations and groups that are involved in this general area. In an effort to reduce the problem to more manageable size, we have stimulated the growth of the [*1-1/2 lines of source text not declassified*] which serves as a point of reference if not direction of a wide variety of youth activities. Through [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] we have supported the training of university students for peace corps type work in local areas. We have also managed to stimulate considerable interest in the building of youth hostels in various provincial capitals so that high school students will have a place to stay when they come from surrounding, and frequently VC-controlled, areas to study. For various reasons, this program is not yet underway, but it offers considerable promise of being able to provide low-key indoctrination for the students while staying at the hostels.

In the media field, we continue the routine, day-by-day, process of attempting to influence local public opinion through placement of material in an assortment of local media. In addition to spot items of immediate tactical value, this material ranges from educational articles on local constitutional development to commentary on international issues relating to Vietnam.

In respect to *political party work*, the first issue of the Dai Viet theoretical journal to appear since the beginning of the subsidy contained three articles dealing with the importance of open party activity.

90. Memorandum From the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Secretary of Defense McNamara¹

JCSM–107–67

Washington, February 27, 1967.

SUBJECT

A Settlement of the Conflict in Vietnam (U)

1. (S) Reference is made to a report to the President by General Maxwell D. Taylor, dated 30 January 1967,² in which he sets forth five key questions bearing on the subject of a settlement of the conflict in Vietnam.

2. (S) Appendix A³ contains responses to General Taylor's questions. It is recommended that the positions of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, summarized in Annex A to Appendix A, be considered in the formulation of a comprehensive US policy on the settlement of the conflict in Vietnam.

3. (C) Since these questions involve matters of interdepartmental interest, you may wish to forward a copy of the paper to the Secretary of State. A suggested memorandum for that purpose is attached as Appendix B.⁴

4. (C) The Joint Chiefs of Staff request that, in the future formulation of US policy concerning a settlement of the conflict in Vietnam, they be afforded an opportunity to provide you their views based upon the situation which exists at the time.

5. (U) Without attachments, this memorandum is downgraded to Secret.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

Earle G. Wheeler⁵

Chairman

Joint Chiefs of Staff

¹ Source: Department of Defense, Official Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 911/080 (30 Jan 67), IR #557. Top Secret; Sensitive.

² Document 30.

³ Appendix A, not printed, is a table of contents for Annexes A–F, of which only Annex A is printed below.

⁴ Not printed.

⁵ Printed from a copy that indicates that General Wheeler signed the original.

Annex A to Appendix A

RECAPITULATION

Question

1: What price should we exact for the cessation of bombing in the north? (Annex B)

Conclusions

a. The minimum price we should exact for a cessation of our bombing in the North is a cessation by North Vietnam of its infiltration of personnel and matériel into South Vietnam and Laos, with effective inspection and verification thereof.

b. The Government of Vietnam has the sovereign right of circulation throughout all of South Vietnam and the obligation to protect its citizens and to maintain law and order. In no instance should this right be restricted, jeopardized, or negotiated.

c. Since a cessation of our bombing in the North is one of our most important negotiating assets, we should endeavor to exact additional concessions. In terms of immediacy, these concessions include:

(1) A cessation of support and direction by North Vietnam of the Viet Cong and conclusive demonstration that withdrawal to North Vietnam has begun of North Vietnamese military forces and equipment and cadres from South Vietnam and the demilitarized zone, and from the Laotian Panhandle.

(2) A cessation of North Vietnamese military operations in South Vietnam.

(3) A significant reduction of North Vietnamese/Viet Cong acts of terrorism in South Vietnam.

d. Additional concessions, in terms of what is needed for the restoration of peace in South Vietnam, are listed below. While these concessions are not now of the immediacy of those in paragraph b, above, they could become so with the passage of time and changes in the military situation.

(1) The withdrawal by North Vietnam of all its military forces and equipment and cadres from South Vietnam and the demilitarized zone, and from the areas of Laos not occupied by the communists prior to the signing of the Geneva Accords on Laos on 1962, with effective inspection and verification. During this withdrawal, all radio transmissions would be in the clear. Withdrawal would include the dismantling of the communications net.

(2) A cessation of all North Vietnamese/Viet Cong acts of terrorism in South Vietnam.

(3) Agreement by North Vietnam and the Viet Cong to exchange prisoners with the allies.

e. A firm agenda for reaching agreement on specific issues should be established, and progress on this agenda should be insisted upon. Drawn-out negotiations caused by communist intransigence or stalling or communist violation of any of the conditions which led to a cessation of the bombing in North Vietnam should constitute a basis for resumption of the bombing.

Question

2: What forms of verification are essential to protect ourselves against unfulfilled communist promises or the traps of a phony de-escalation? (Annex C)

Conclusions

a. There is no case since World War II where an international peacekeeping organization has been fully effective in maintaining the peace. Moreover, in view of past patterns of communist intransigence, subversion and obstructionist tactics, there is serious doubt that any form of an international control commission can be effective in Vietnam.

b. If the United States is to accept an international control commission in Vietnam, a new organization must be developed which is free of the serious deficiencies of the present commission.

c. The preferred alternative to a new international control commission, and the best way of assuring effective verification, is unilateral inspection and policing of the truce by the belligerents themselves, particularly during the period of negotiations and prior to assumption of this responsibility by an international control commission. Such activities would include: patrolling and unlimited access by US/Government of Vietnam/Free World Military Assistance Forces to all parts of South Vietnam, including the southern portion of the demilitarized zone; air reconnaissance and surveillance over North Vietnam, South Vietnam, and Laos, as well as other forms of intelligence collection, to include coastal surveillance of North Vietnam, South Vietnam and Cambodia, and covert operations in Laos and Cambodia to detect any attempts by North Vietnam/Viet Cong to infiltrate personnel and matériel into those countries and from them into South Vietnam.

d. Under a formal agreement requiring withdrawal of US forces, inspection and verification should be placed in the hands of an international organization only if it is in-being, in-place, and effective. It should be recognized, however, that the organization probably would have neither the responsibility for nor the capability of enforcing the peace.

e. DIA and other intelligence resources should continue surveillance and analysis of areas, points, and routes on land, sea, and in the

air to include North Vietnam and South Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and other possible areas of interest in Southeast Asia; further, data derived therefrom should be kept current for ready reference.

Question

3: What role in negotiations will we concede to the Government of Vietnam and to our allies who are contributing military forces? (Annex D)

Conclusions

a. The Seven Nations⁶ should develop their negotiating positions and strategy well in advance of any peace negotiations. Their pronouncements in the Manila Communiqué can provide a suitable framework for the objectives to be sought. The negotiating strategy should prescribe the role of each allied nation, to include who will be negotiators and who will be observers. The negotiators should be South Vietnam and the United States (ostensibly the United States would be an observer with the understanding that, behind the scene, it would have a primary role). The remainder would be observers.

b. Since the main antagonists are South Vietnam and North Vietnam, and in order not to create the impression of impinging upon South Vietnamese sensibilities concerning their sovereign status, the Government of Vietnam should desirably be the principal visible spokesman on the allied side, contingent upon the Government of Vietnam adopting positions acceptable to the United States and the other allies. During the negotiations, it will be necessary that the Seven Nations act in close consultation and coordination on all substantive issues.

c. Prenegotiation arrangements might begin with military representation from the Government of Vietnam and North Vietnam, and US observers, meeting in the demilitarized zone (or other suitable location) in order to establish the ground rules for the negotiations. At that time, based upon guidance from higher authority, conference representation would be decided upon. Such representation would be consistent with the nature, scope, and objectives of the conference.

d. Negotiators dealing with military matters should be military personnel. An advisory committee of military representatives of the Government of Vietnam, the United States, and our Third Country Allies contributing military forces should be formed in order to enable the attainment of a unison of military views on matters of a military nature.

⁶ Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Vietnam, Thailand, and the United States. [Footnote in the source text.]

Question

4: How will we avoid a stalemate in negotiations on the pattern of Panmunjom? (Annex E)

Conclusions

a. A cessation of our military operations against the enemy prior to and/or during the negotiations would enhance the communist position, would provide North Vietnam with an opportunity to sustain and increase its support of the Viet Cong, and would enable it to string out the negotiations in the hope of wearing down the allied negotiators and, thus, of obtaining a settlement more favorable to the communists.

b. Despite pressures to suspend US/Government of Vietnam/Free World Military Assistance Forces military operations in order to provide ostensibly a more favorable climate for negotiations, such operations, including air and naval actions against North Vietnam, should be continued during the negotiations, except insofar as North Vietnam has met our conditions for halting the bombing. In any event, a cessation of our bombing in the North should not restrict allied military operations in the South or in Laos, which should be continued during the negotiations.

c. If a decision is made to suspend the bombing in North Vietnam, in connection with their meeting our conditions for such a halt preliminary to negotiations, the bombing should be resumed if communist intransigence or stalling precludes satisfactory progress during the negotiations.

d. Therefore, military operations should be continued and should be pressed vigorously during negotiations. They should be suspended only to the extent agreed upon in the negotiations. It should be made clear that any failure on the part of North Vietnam to comply with the terms of any agreement will be met by a resumption of hostilities (if they have been suspended or reduced) in an appropriate degree.

e. The Government of Vietnam has the sovereign right of circulation throughout all of South Vietnam and the obligation to protect its citizens and to maintain law and order. In no instance should this right be restricted, jeopardized, or negotiated.

Question

5: How can we prepare US and international public opinion for the tough positions which the United States must take in any settlement which will achieve our basic objective of an independent Vietnam free from aggression? (Annex F)

Conclusions

a. We should be doing everything possible now to gain the support of US and international public opinion for our position on Vietnam. Our approach must emphasize the reasonableness of this position.

b. The United States needs to assert the following points in order to gain understanding and acceptance by US and international public opinion:

(1) That the United States will stop bombing in the North when presented with clear evidence of a commensurate reciprocal de-escalation of hostilities by the other side. Further, that the United States will not discontinue bombing, or curtail other military efforts which contribute to the protection of the people of South Vietnam and the armed forces of our allies in South Vietnam as a price for participation in negotiations. Moreover, we would expect that the communists would enter negotiations with a sincere desire to achieve a satisfactory peace settlement within a reasonable period of time.

(2) That our bombing in the North has been against highly selective and, in many instances, heavily defended military targets; that great destruction at undefended points could have been accomplished with enormous effect and with far less loss to US forces if it were not for the humanitarian restraint exercised by the United States.

(3) That our side reserves the right, in the absence of an effective system of controls, to decide whether agreements have been violated and to take appropriate action.

(4) That, in the light of the Korean experience, the allies will not participate in a prolonged Panmunjom-type negotiation in which devious communist negotiating techniques were employed. That the United States, in the absence of steady progress, reserves the right to take selective military actions.

(5) That the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong continue to be encouraged to take advantage of Government of Vietnam amnesty programs during negotiations, offering them the opportunity to reintegrate as peaceful and useful citizens in South Vietnam.

(6) That the United States wants to get on with the important business of helping to build a nation in an atmosphere of peace and security.

(7) That, with honest fulfillment by the communists of the provisions applicable to them under the Manila Communiqué, US/FWMAF will withdraw based upon their commitments in that Communiqué.

(8) That the United States, as a further demonstration of its peaceful intentions and humanitarianism, reaffirms its willingness to assist in the economic development of Southeast Asia and otherwise to promote regional cooperation.

c. The Secretary of State should be requested to form an interdepartmental study group to determine the scope, responsibility, timing, and content of the public statements necessary to establish our position on the above points. Such statements would include those to be made by key government and civil leaders of both the United States and South Vietnam, as well as those of other allied countries and of other countries whose support we are seeking.

91. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Komer) to President Johnson¹

Washington, February 28, 1967.

SUBJECT

Change For The Better—Latest Impressions from Vietnam

After almost a year full-time on Vietnam, and six trips there, I felt able to learn a good deal from my eleven days in country, 13–23 February. I return more optimistic than ever before. The cumulative change since my first visit last April is dramatic, if not yet visibly demonstrable in all respects. Indeed, I'll reaffirm even more vigorously my prognosis of last November (which few shared then) that growing momentum would be achieved in 1967 on almost every front in Vietnam.

I. *General Impressions.* Wastefully, expensively, but nonetheless indisputably, we are winning the war in the South. Few of our programs—civil or military—are very efficient, but we are grinding down the enemy by sheer weight and mass. And the cumulative impact of all we have set in motion is beginning to tell. Pacification still lags the most, yet even it is moving forward.

Indeed my broad feeling, with due allowance for oversimplification, is that *our side now has in presently programmed levels all the men, money, and other resources needed to achieve success.* There is so much in country—Vietnamese and US—that some programs are even beginning to get in the way of each other.

If this is so, our greatest present need on the US and especially GVN sides is to pull together our multiplicity of programs, set better priorities, refine program content, and do whatever else is necessary to get the most out of the massive effort which can now be supported by the incredible logistic base which we have built. This is easier said than done. I also believe that we could “win” eventually anyway even without better management. But we can achieve our purposes more quickly, and with less cost in blood and treasure, through more effective utilization of resources already available.

¹ Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, McNamara Vietnam Files: FRC 77-0075, January and February 1967. Secret. Komer had participated the previous day in a press conference with the President and David Lilienthal, head of the American side of a joint U.S.-South Vietnamese nongovernmental development planning group, at which time he discussed several of his conclusions contained in this memorandum. See *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1967*, pp. 863–865. The various operations that constituted the U.S. pacification support program became housed in the OCO after November 1966.

If better management is the key, the first requisite (I again contend) is a vigorous top US team in Saigon. The second is better civil/military coordination, especially in the critical gray area of pacification. Third, and by far the most important, is a more effective and coordinated GVN effort, though experience dictates that results in this area will come slowly at best. Whatever new GVN emerges from the political process now in motion may be even less “efficient” in many respects than the present Ky regime, though its weaknesses are such that the difference might be marginal. However, the political plus from an elected government would far outweigh any likely loss in administrative efficiency.

Lastly, that vital intangible—the mood of the people—is changing for the better. As CAS chief John Hart put it, a “victory psychology” is beginning to emerge in Vietnam. I saw it everywhere I went—in the confidence shown by GVN officers and officials high and low in the 10 provinces I visited, in the growing traffic on the roads, the increased pace of economic activity, the tone of the press, and the way in which more civilians are emerging to take part in the political process. This optimism is shared by most US military and civilians; the chief remaining doubters are a large segment of the US press corps and many of the US officials concerned with pacification. To my mind, many of this latter group fail to see the forest for all the trees, as will become clear in the following sections of this report.

[Here follows the body of the paper, in which Komer discussed the status of political, military, pacification, and economic measures in South Vietnam.]

VI. The Future Course of the War.

Though my latest visit was the most encouraging yet, I don’t wish to end on a note of excessive optimism. Even if most things are beginning to break our way, Hanoi retains the option—should it choose to suffer the pain—of a protracted guerrilla war aimed at waiting us out. Many think it will do so, at least through our 1968 elections. Plenty could still go wrong on our side too, especially a political crisis in Saigon as the Vietnamese struggle over who should inherit the fruits of American success.

Yet I return from Vietnam with more confidence than ever in my November prognosis that 1967–68 would be a period of gathering success, and that by mid-1968 at the latest it would be clear to all that we were “winning” the war in the South. Indeed, I now believe that it will be clear much sooner—almost surely by end-1967 if not before. It now seems quite conceivable that gathering momentum in the South, plus the turmoil in China and our continued pressure on the North, could lead to negotiation or Hanoi fadeaway in 1967. And I am one of those

who believe that cessation of infiltration from the North would almost inevitably be a decisive psychological shock to the southern VC.

Even if the VC/NVA manage to sustain a protracted war, it seems likely that we can inflict such damage on them in the next 12–18 months—and achieve sufficient pacification, political and economic progress in the south—to reduce the enemy threat to proportions permitting redeployment of some US forces. In this case, Vietnam would gradually become more like a super-Malaya case, in which continued attrition of the enemy hard core could take years—but at a rate of loss and cost to us far less than in the present phase. In sum, we will face plenty of problems in Vietnam, but these are increasingly the problems of gathering success—no longer those of forestalling disaster.²

I will submit separately a list of action recommendations.³

R. W. Komer

² The CIA echoed Komer's optimism. In a February 18 memorandum entitled "Pacification and Nation-building in Vietnam: Present Status, Current Trends and Prospects," Helms presented the Agency's analysis to Komer, Vance, Rostow, and Bundy. Its summary reads as follows: "Major strides have been made in improving the organization and effectiveness of pacification and nation-building programs on both the U.S. and GVN sides. The recent integration of U.S. civil operations into a single organization should markedly improve their effectiveness, and the aggressive leadership of the Minister for Revolutionary Development is beginning to overcome past weaknesses in the Vietnamese administrative structure. The Vietnamese civilian cadre apparatus has been completely overhauled in the past year, with various groups integrated into a single, standardized organization. Some weaknesses in cadre leadership and recruit selection remain, however, and the current emphasis on achieving quality rather than quantity will limit the expansion of revolutionary development activities in the countryside. Effective integration of civilian cadre activities with local security resources also remains a problem in many areas." The conclusion of the memorandum described the prospects for the program as "generally favorable." The effective employment of the ARVN in support of pacification and the ability of the allied military forces to stem intensified VC activity in 1967 would be decisive in shifting the civil struggle in favor of the GVN. (Washington National Records Center, RG 330, McNamara Files: FRC 71 A 3470, Vietnam 380 Pacification 1967)

³ Not found.

92. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, March 1, 1967, 0730Z.

19209. For the President from Lodge. Herewith my weekly telegram:

A. Lilienthal Visit²

1. It was good to have David Lilienthal and his experts here. He traveled widely and spoke with businessmen, farmers, government officials and college students. In fact, he spent one evening with 36 students, getting their views on the economic development of their country. He made a very favorable impression on the Vietnamese as a man genuinely interested in their problems and in their hopes for their country.

2. He was impressed by the caliber of the Vietnamese with whom he will work and was encouraged by their enthusiasm and their earnest desire to work. He believes, as do I, that both the human and the natural resources are here.

3. We are thus off to a good start on this project of defining Viet-Nam's economic path in the future. Mr. Lilienthal is already acting as a catalyst around which the Vietnamese can work and discuss what comes after the war. This could be nation-building in the best sense of the word.

B. Pressures on Hanoi

4. In Ky's mind, and that of other leading Vietnamese, the idea is growing that evolution toward a constitutionally elected President is a great source of pressure on Hanoi. They believe it would make establishment of Communism in the future much more difficult here, notably because it would make the insertion of the so-called NLF as such into the Government of Viet-Nam almost impossible. To be sure, individuals could in theory get elected to Congress in an individual capacity, but this would be totally different.

5. In the Vietnamese view, to "put the NLF into the GVN" would confer a benediction on the worst criminal-terrorist elements; would mean defeat and consequent stultification of all who have made sacri-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Priority; Nodis. Received at 5:31 a.m.

² Lilienthal, who had led the Tennessee Valley Authority re-development project in the United States, headed a joint U.S.-South Vietnamese group concerned with developing long-range plans for postwar development in Vietnam. See footnote 1, Document 91.

fices here; would confirm the right of the Viet Cong to hold at least the 20 percent of the population which they now largely control; would be a signal to all GVN troops to stop fighting; and would give a hunting license to Viet Cong to start expansion of terrorism among the 80 percent presently not under Viet Cong domination. The current GVN would undoubtedly regard putting the NLF into the government of South Viet-Nam as an individual death sentence for many Vietnamese, specifically including themselves.

6. The conviction that the developments in para 5 above would be made much more difficult, if not impossible, under a constitutional government is responsible for Ky's desire to hold the election as soon as it is humanly possible to do so after the Constitution has been promulgated. Considering the difficulties of setting up an election, with the printing of the ballots and all the rest, I estimate a period of anywhere between three to six months after promulgation of a Constitution before the election could be held.

7. Another result of Ky's conviction that the move toward an elected constitutional president is so important was his statement to me on the day when I went to see him to tell him about your decision on increased military pressure. At that time, he said that even if a civilian was elected president whom he, Ky, did not like, he would support him so that Viet-Nam could speak and act internationally with one strong, authoritative and legitimate voice. He obviously would be supporting the process rather than indulging individual preferences—a wholesome and unusual attitude here. He also is much impressed with the question of legitimacy, and has been concerned by the feeling abroad that his government lacks legitimacy. He believes that an election would confer a legitimacy which nobody could question.

8. All this naturally raises the question of the U.S. view of the Presidential election. I have asked my American colleagues here to say two things in response to all questions: A) we have not and will not interfere in the internal affairs of Viet-Nam. The question of what individual they elect for President is their business and is an internal question. B) We expect to recognize whoever is duly elected.

9. *Comment:* This is a safe position for us to take since there is as yet no candidate who is dangerous for us—nor is there one in sight. I also prefer to use the word "recognize" rather than the word "support." There is a vast difference between our "supporting" a certain group in power, and our "recognizing" that group as the due Government of Viet-Nam. I remember when the late Senator Taft criticized the administrators of the Marshall Plan for "supporting" the Labor government of England. The answer was that we were not "supporting" the Labor government and that in an election between them and the Conservatives, we would be impartial, but the Labor government was

the duly constituted government, and we had to work through it if the Marshall Plan were to be carried out.

10. Every day brings an attempt by someone, usually very cleverly done, to involve us in some of these candidacies. And there are all too many Americans who regard it as their God-given right to say whom they favor for President of Viet-Nam. This led me to utter words of caution at the Mission Council meeting last Monday.

C. Constitution

11. Last week the Assembly moved swiftly through both the executive and the judiciary sections of the draft Constitution. Still to be considered are sections on advisory councils, political parties and the opposition, amending the Constitution, and the transitional provisions.

12. The powers of the President were further increased, in accord with the wishes of the government, by reducing the importance of the Prime Minister. The President will determine national policy and the Prime Minister will execute it; the President will also preside over the Council of Ministers, thus diminishing the authority of the Prime Minister over the Cabinet.

13. Among the problems yet to come before the Assembly is the proposal by General Thieu that the Assembly write into the Constitution provision for a High Council for National Defense and the Armed Forces. The Council would advise the President on matters relating to national defense. In a February 22 letter to the Assembly, Thieu said that "The Council will be an institution through which the military can make its voice heard, contribute to national reconstruction, and legally set forth the aspirations of those who have sacrificed so much for their country." Thieu also said that "Such a Council will keep military personnel from feeling that they are mere instruments of persons who are irresponsible or acting for their personal benefit."

14. Thieu in effect would give the present Armed Forces Council a place in the basic law of the land. There is much to be said for thus constitutionally regularizing the rights and duties of the highest military authority in this country where it has an importance unknown in our country. Some civilian politicians fear that the body would not be content merely to advise the President. Presidential hopeful Tranh Van Huong, for example, told an Embassy officer that the Armed Forces Council is an "illegal body" and that if it is embedded in the Constitution it will "interfere" in the government in a destructive way. Best guess is that after a sharp debate, the Assembly will provide for such a body in the Constitution.

15. Other major issues yet to be decided include the proposal for election of province chiefs, the role of the current Assembly after the promulgation of the Constitution, and provisions covering the formation and activities of political parties.

16. In his February 22 letter to the Assembly, the second such official message from the government to the Deputies, Thieu also opposed election of province chiefs and urged that the Assembly reconsider its decision on "no confidence" votes. As the Constitution now stands, the legislature can force removal of the Prime Minister only by a 3/4 vote of the total membership of both houses. Although in practice such a vote would probably prove extremely difficult if not impossible to achieve, the Directorate is still dissatisfied with this provision. Thieu has asked that a vote of no confidence not be binding on the President under any circumstances.

D. Carrying out Manila pledges

17. The Vietnamese Government has been slow in carrying out some of the promises made at Manila,³ but there is now some progress. The effort to elect thousands of hamlet chiefs and village officials is going well. Ky kicked off the organization of the elections personally by appearing at the corps seminars being held for the provincial officials who will conduct the elections. In a speech at the III Corps seminar, Ky stressed the importance of building democracy at the lowest levels of society, and he emphasized the necessity for conducting completely honest elections. Although military personnel on active duty (including Regional Forces and Popular Forces) will not be permitted to run in the hamlet and village elections, Ky hit hard at those who may think that the military is not capable of playing a constructive role in the building of democracy. He asked for tolerance by the people of the military and vice versa. Also in Can Tho on February 28, Ky stressed the continuing role of the military in completing the social revolution. In III Corps, government preparations for the elections include planning for a training program after the elections for some 1,775 village officials.

18. During the past week, the land reform effort progressed with the distribution of land titles at two large ceremonies attended by Ky and other Cabinet officers.

19. General Thieu is clearly and thoroughly committed to the Manila pledge of a program of national reconciliation. In fact, he is enthusiastic about it, having called in Zorthian for a long discussion. Thieu said that he knew we felt the government had not moved quickly enough to carry out its Manila commitments because he had not issued a national reconciliation proclamation either on Tet or November 1. He explained that the government had not made the necessary preparations by either of those dates and he had decided the simple issuance of a proclamation without the necessary preparations would result in

³ A reference to the commitments to extend the political base in South Vietnam made in the declaration following the October 1966 Manila conference. See *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1966*, Book II, pp. 1259–1265.

failure. He also pointed out that an offer of full civil and political rights for returnees would be less impressive without the existence of a Constitution.

20. Thieu told Zorthian that the occasion of the promulgation of the Constitution would be the best time for the announcement. He said this would provide enough time to undertake preparations for an increased influx of returnees and also give the Viet Cong enough time to come in and undergo screening and a reorientation process before participating in the Presidential elections in the late summer or early fall.

21. Thieu also said that he felt there were three essential preparatory steps that must be accomplished between now and the time of the national reconciliation proclamation, as follows:

A) The first would be an intensive educational effort among government officials down to the lowest ranks. He said he and other members of the government would undertake this effort through travels around the country.

B) Secondly, adequate resources must be available to handle returnees both at Chieu Hoi centers and at resettlement projects.

C) Third, preparations must be made and resources assured for a major psychological operations campaign. Throughout his lengthy presentation of his ideas on this subject, Thieu emphasized the importance of performance on the part of the GVN and the potential shortening of the war through draining off Viet Cong strength.

[Here follows discussion of defections, port congestion, and military matters.]

Lodge

93. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, March 1, 1967, 1330Z.

19263. 1. I called on Ky on Wednesday afternoon² saying that there was "something that worried me."

2. I began by saying how much respect there was for Ky in the United States, that his handling of the Hue/Danang situation last

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Limdis. Received at 9:24 a.m. Repeated to Bangkok, Paris, Vientiane, and CINCPAC for POLAD.

² March 1.

spring, the devaluation of the currency, and the move toward a constitution all had given him the appearance abroad of a "mature and skillful statesman."

3. Now come the demonstrations in Saigon,³ which led to breaking open the French Consulate General, setting fires, beating people up. However unjustly, Ky was held responsible. If this went on he would no longer appear as a "mature and skillful statesman" but would appear "immature and clumsy." These were the words to apply not only to the demonstrations in Saigon but also to the preposterous cock and bull story out of Paris about a coalition government in exile.

4. He knew my views about a so-called coalition government but surely the concoction about the government in exile in Paris was not the way to cope with the problem.

5. I understood that there were men of merit who might have been involved and I wished to point out that a man who shows courage and capacity as a police officer in the maintenance of law and order was not for that reason very clever about politics.

6. He had often said that I was an advisor to him on American affairs and so I felt that when I saw a little cloud "no bigger than a man's hand" I should tell him about it before real trouble began.

7. He thanked me and said that when his permission had been requested for a demonstration against the French, he had seen no objection since it is always the French who are always trying to make trouble.

8. I said that it was perfectly all right for people to parade and carry signs, but what reminded everyone of Communist techniques was when they broke into the Consulate General and started to burn and beat people up.

9. He said it had gone too far and assured me it was all over and would not happen again. As we were going to the door, he said, rather as an afterthought, "As a matter of fact, I agree with you completely."⁴

Lodge

³ Daily demonstrations against "false peace" had begun outside the French Consulate in Saigon after the February 24 announcement of the formation of a "government-in-exile" in Paris by Bao Dai and Nguyen Huu Tho. Speculation within South Vietnam was that the demonstrations were more the result of "rivalry" between Thieu and Ky than of the need to show "domestic determination" or "a militant stand to the world at large." (Memorandum of conversation, March 4, enclosed in airgram A-53 from Saigon, March 16; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 14 VIET S)

⁴ In an intelligence report by the CIA, March 10, Ky is described as advocating an "anti-peace movement" to counteract any attempt by the U.S. Government to install a coalition government in South Vietnam. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXVII)

94. Telephone Conversation Between President Johnson and Senator Mike Mansfield¹

Washington, March 1, 1967, 9:53 a.m.

Mansfield: "The Congress hereby declares—one: its firm intention to provide all necessary support for members of the armed forces of the United States fighting in Vietnam; two: its support of efforts being made by the President of the United States—the President was not in the Clark second resolution—and other men of goodwill throughout the world to prevent an expansion of the war in Vietnam and to bring that conflict to an end through a negotiated settlement which will preserve the honor of the United States, protect the vital interests of the country, and allow the people of South Vietnam to determine the affairs of that nation in their own way; and three: its support of the Geneva Accords of '54 and urges the convening of that conference or any other meeting of nations similarly involved and interested as soon as possible for the purpose of formulating plans for bringing the conflict to an honorable conclusion in accordance with the principles of those Accords." You have said every one of those things.²

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and Mansfield, March 1, 1967, 9:53 a.m., Tape 67.08, Side A, PNO 1. No classification marking. This transcript was prepared in the Office of the Historian specifically for this volume.

² After being reported out of the Armed Services Committee on February 23, the Senate began debate on the supplemental authorization bill for fiscal year 1967 known as S665. The amendment that Mansfield read to the President was a substitute for two amendments to the appropriations bill, introduced by Senator Joseph Clark (D-PA). Clark's first amendment prohibited funds for operations against the DRV or augmentation of forces in South Vietnam and included a statement of support for a negotiated settlement. The second resolution affirmed Congressional support for U.S. troops in Vietnam and included a statement of support for a negotiated settlement and a declaration that the 1954 Geneva Accords should serve as the basis for settlement of the conflict. For text of Clark's resolutions, see *Congressional Record*, vol. 113, pp. 5279–5284. The Mansfield amendment, which also included a reference to the 1962 Geneva Accords, passed by a vote of 72–19 on February 28 and was attached to the final authorization bill approved by the Senate 89–2 on March 1. On March 2 the House of Representatives passed HR4515, as reported from the House Armed Services Committee on February 24, and substituted its language for the provisions of S665, which was passed by voice vote. The bill went into conference on March 7; both the House and Senate adopted S665 on March 8. See *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, Vol. XXIII, 1967, pp. 204–209. On March 12 the President discussed the issue of appropriations for the war effort with his advisers. (Johnson Library, Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings) The President signed Public Law 90–5 on March 16 authorizing an additional \$4.5 billion in supplemental expenditures in Vietnam. For text, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1967, pp. 885–886. The total amount of the funds needed for the remainder of fiscal year 1967 was reduced by \$80 million by Congress; the total appropriation of \$12.2 billion was reported on March 17 and signed into law by the President on April 4. See *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, Vol. XXIII, 1967, pp. 209–211.

President: Yeah. Is that it?

Mansfield: That's it.

President: Now what's going to be your argument—just say rather than declare war we just substitute this?

Mansfield: That's right. The other argument goes too far; it infringes upon the executive, it has a lot of loopholes in it, and we're up facing an accomplished fact, and we have to go through with it. We cannot withdraw, we will not withdraw, and we'll continue our efforts, and this is it.

President: What we want to do now out there—I've talked to you I think once before and then I'll be through—I'm giving serious thought, I've got to meet with them sometime, our 6 months is about up, and we're trying to get Ky to come on and have an election as quickly as we can after the Constitution comes in. Lodge will be moving out; he can't stay, we've got to move him somewhere else. We are thinking seriously of making Westmoreland, who has the leadership qualities and the respect of everybody with whom he has ever dealt, and particularly our AID people and particularly our State people and the military people, giving him overall command. He just wears the uniform and he'll be our number one man in Vietnam until they have their presidential election and get a man elected. He'll replace Lodge in effect and replace Westmoreland in effect. But we'll have under him that we expect to develop, the younger men—Abrams, who would be Chief of Staff of the Army here if he stayed here, but we want to send him out there to try to see if we can't put a new touch on our pacification and get a new approach to try to get this country of South Vietnam back on its feet. We're going to make a desperate effort to move Sullivan out of Laos in there to take Porter's job—Porter is tired—and probably move Bob Komer out to do work on the other side of the war: the pacification, schools, and hospitals. And then we're going to make one desperate pitch if we can to get Ellsworth Bunker to go there as Ambassador at Large to really be the midwife like he did with the Dominican Republic—to try to get the civilian election held, to try to see that it's fair, to try to get the generals to have a civilian viewpoint and understand that that's more important to have a good election than it is to win a big battle and try to guide them like he did. He's in perfect health now, he feels good, he's younger than I am, but he does have 72 years old. But I, look, last night, I was talking to Mac Bundy, he said, "Well, Secretary Stimson³ came down here as the greatest Secretary of War at 73 and stayed 5 years, and this fellow oughtn't have to stay over

³ Henry Stimson, Secretary of War, 1911–1913, Secretary of State, 1929–1933, and again Secretary of War, 1940–1945.

5 months in this transition period." And we've got Westmoreland there so if something happened to the older man, he got a little senile or something, we wouldn't be caught. At the same time, we think he has enough stature and enough respect of the whole world, and certainly Westmoreland would respect him enough, that he in effect would be the political man and diplomatic man, and we'd just use Westmoreland's stars to keep Ky in line, and we're doing that, and doing it pretty effectively since Honolulu. We've made him go with a Constituent Assembly, and Westmoreland's worked his heart out and we've got him going now with a presidential election, and he's agreed to move it up 4 or 5 months. I want to get your reaction to that.

Mansfield: It sounds like it has a possibility. I'd sort of like to think it through, Mr. President.

President: All right. I don't know that he'll do it. The weakness is, I don't know whether Westmoreland will want to take on a little more responsibility, it's kind of to supervise the other. We think we need to do that because of his position there. I don't know that Bunker would want to work under somebody, you see, as an older man, but he is not familiar with all these things. But he has an approach that nobody in the government has.

Mansfield: He's been a good soldier too.

President: That's right. He does, that's right. He just goes wherever the ball is. If it's going around end, he'll go there, if it goes through the line, he goes. He doesn't seem to pick up any barnacles or hurt anybody's feelings or he doesn't get in any fights. Most of the State Department people got problems, but he doesn't seem to get any. Think it over. Say nothing about it. I'm thinking it over this weekend. I'm going to send for him and see if I can talk him into it. But I've got to do something and I've got to find something for Lodge. I don't know where I'll put him.

Mansfield: Uh-huh. Okay, Mr. President, do that. Thank you.

President: Bye.

95. Telephone Conversation Between President Johnson and Senator Henry Jackson¹

Washington, March 2, 1967, 2:04 p.m.

President: Where are you?

Jackson: I'm in the cloak room on the telephone.

President: We were talking the other night about our bombing policy, and all of this stuff cannot be available, but you have seen it from time to time. I told him after we got back to prepare a note to give to you on what we were doing out there, and Rostow went back and got that old report that he worked for Max Taylor, '61, do you remember that?²

Jackson: Well, I remember in a general way.

President: Max Taylor said that we ought to try to stop this thing, but if we couldn't stop it, the time would come in this new class of warfare where we'd have to hit at the sources of guerrilla strength in the North, and he said, "I won't make that decision now, but if what we do now is not successful, we'll have to do that," you see what I mean. So he started, he told President Kennedy, and he told everybody, you and me and everybody else that saw his report at the time or that heard about it or discussed it, that we might have to come to this. I'm going to make that part of the report available together with some of the reasons for our bombing, and if you want to, I'm going to send you up a letter that I had Rostow draft for me that sometime you can put in the record.³

Jackson: I'd be happy to do it. You know, I spent 3-1/2 hours on Friday⁴ on this bombing business, and strongly supported what you're doing.

President: Yes, I knew that. We were talking about it the other night in front of the fireplace over there when we were having dinner,⁵ about what you were saying and what you were doing. So I got Rostow to

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and Jackson, March 2, 1967, 2:04 p.m., Tape F67.08, Side A, PNO 4. No classification marking. This transcript was prepared in the Office of the Historian specifically for this volume.

² See *Foreign Relations, 1961–1963*, vol. I, Document 210. The President discussed the recommendations of the Taylor report in his news conference of March 2. See *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1967*, Book I, pp. 259–262.

³ Later the same day Jackson publicly released the letter he received from Johnson. For text, see *ibid.*, pp. 267–269.

⁴ February 24.

⁵ Jackson dined at the White House on the evening of February 18. (Johnson Library, President's Daily Diary)

try to make a summation of why we were doing all these things, and the background of it and all of it. And I thought that if I get it up to you by messenger, you might put it in.

Jackson: You can just say that I requested this.

President: Well, I'd just say with reference to our discussions the other evening, I'll look on my diary when it was and your calendar will show you when it was, and then you can put it in the record and maybe make a little comment. I think it will be kind of the first release of the Taylor report and I think a lot of people will want to look at substantial parts of it. And then I think it gives a pretty good summary of what we are doing there and why on this bombing. For instance, our Cabinet met yesterday and they say, "Everybody says why are you bombing—it doesn't do any good." The hell it doesn't. When these folks, those that get through and finally get down there, they are worn out because they've been bombed all the way down.

Jackson: Mr. President, I think the important argument is that if the North Vietnamese, that if they're not being hurt, why were they making every effort to try to stop it. You know, I'm just a country boy, but we understand that out home.

President: You're exactly right, and that's the best way to say it. But what you can say is, "The other night I was having dinner at the White House and I just asked the President, give us the best reasons you can and the history why and what and he told me he would and he wrote me and here it is." Period.

Jackson: Right. Well, if you'll have someone get it to the office right away, I'll try to get it in today.

96. Telephone Conversation Between President Johnson and Senator Richard Russell¹

Washington, March 2, 1967, 3:04 p.m.

President: In Bobby's long speech, there was really just two things. He says that he wants to test Kosygin's sincerity by halting the bombardment and saying we are ready to negotiate within the week, mak-

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and Russell, March 2, 1967, 3:15 p.m., Tape F67.08, Side A, PNO 5. No classification marking. This transcript was prepared in the Office of the Historian specifically for this volume.

ing it clear that discussions cannot continue for a prolonged period without an agreement, and that neither side will substantially increase the size of the war in South Vietnam.² That's the important proposal he makes. It's not important, but that's what he does. Now we just finished doing that. I don't know where the hell he was. But against the advice of our military people, against the wishes of a good many of the countries associated with us, we halted the bombardment for 6 days and we said we are ready to negotiate and we pled with not only Ho Chi Minh direct. I wrote him a letter that you say—you said some of my actions were "unseemly," but I . . .

Russell: I said "almost unseemly."

President: I know it. I know it. It didn't hurt my feelings.

Russell: I thought you'd have enough sense to know what I meant.

President: So, now, what I want to point out to you—this is not public, but I want you to know it—I wrote Ho Chi Minh a letter and I said to him that we will halt the bombing and we will stop our augmentation of our troops if you'll stop your infiltration. Now, he just turned me down flat.³

Russell: Did he ever reply to you?

President: Yes, sir, he replied to it, and he said, "No soap." He said the same thing he said to the Pope. Now, that's not known, but what is known is that for 6 days we did just what Senator Kennedy said. We halted the bombardment and said we're ready to negotiate within the week and we made it clear that discussions could not continue for a prolonged period without an agreement that each side would not substantially increase the size of the war. Now we did that for 6 days and each day we would repeat to Kosygin and Wilson to go and tell them that and get back, and they got back with nothing except what the Pope gave us.⁴ So we have tried within the month during the Tet period for 6 days just what the Senator proposes today, and we got the same result that we got the last time the Senator proposed a pause, 37 days—we got nothing. And the same result we got with the 5-day pause that he came down here and suggested that to me. Bobby originated the 5-day one, the first one. We gave them 2 or 3 days notice and told them we were going to pause and asked them if they'd stop, and we'd stop. They just . . .

Russell: When was that, Mr. President?

² In his March 2 speech to the Senate, Kennedy also proposed that an "international presence" be established to gradually replace U.S. troops and that all major political factions be included in the settlement process. For text, see *Congressional Record*, Vol. 13, pp. 5279–5284.

³ See Document 82.

⁴ See Document 42.

President: Oh, a year and a half ago, I guess, I forgot, the last one. That was the first one. Five days. He came alone to this office. He came in here and told me he had "good reason to believe"—these fellows play Secretary of State all around the world—and I stopped it, I notified everybody that I was going to stop it, get ready, told the Russians to see what you can do, and stopped it for 5 days. On the second day after I had stopped it, they spit in our face, turned the letter back to us, and said, "To hell with you. We are not interested in this." So I waited then, for several months, I'd forgotten how long, until the second one came along. Now if you want to know the reconstruction, I reviewed it with you once, but to make it short: The first man they got out there was Fulbright and Dobrynin told him. He came and told me. The next man they got was Mansfield. He came and told me. The third man they got was Morse. He had 3-1/2 hours. He came and told me. Then a number of others whom I do not recall except Bundy. They got Bundy, who was then on my staff. He came and sold McNamara. Then Bundy and McNamara came and tried to sell me and Rusk. We didn't buy it. That held on several days and I went to Texas and they sold Rusk. Then I came back up here and had long detailed meetings that ran for a couple of days and had Clark Clifford and the head of the Intelligence Board and Abe Fortas to come in. I was about sold to start the pause, but Fortas said it was outrageous and predicted exactly what would happen. So did Clifford. Later, McNamara and Bundy said, "You went out and picked up two men on the street that hadn't any information on this and brought them in here and followed their advice instead of ours." I said, "Yeah, I sure as hell did. I'm not going to cause our boys to suffer down there unless I've got some quid pro quo, unless they'll stop doing something." So that went on for about a week. I went back to Texas and refused to take one. Then General Taylor called me up and said that he didn't recommend it, but he would guarantee me that if I was ever going to stop—and it looked like I'd have to, to get ready for the Congress with all of this new money—that now was the time to do it because it wouldn't cost me anything, that the weather was bad and they needed these planes over in Laos anyway, and that he would defend me, and so forth. So I got in my plane, came back and talked to General Wheeler, and Wheeler said that he didn't recommend it, that he wasn't for it, but he did see from the other angle that we ought to show some desire for peace to try to placate the doves and therefore, if I did it, he could defend it because, two reasons, one: he needed these planes in Laos more than he needed them in the North, number one, and number two: the weather was so bad over the North he couldn't get anything done, but it would make it appear pretty good. Well, I didn't never stress that. I want to get all of the blood out of it that I could so I just said "thirty-seven days," and so forth. So I went through that one and was damned lucky to get back in. The last few days it looked

like they'd keep delaying us. They had the British Prime Minister to go and they had Ronning of Canada⁵ to go and they sent our friends over there and then we couldn't bomb while they were there.

So this time the Tet came along. We had grave reservations about it, our military men had grave reservations about it, but we didn't want to be bombing. We said we had agreed to go along with South Vietnam on Christmas, and if we'd go along on Christmas and our New Year, we ought to be fair with them. So we did go along. Now, at that time Kosygin and Wilson were meeting. So, they came to us and I said, "Now we have stopped bombing. Now is the time to get the job done." I did the same thing to Ho Chi Minh. I can't say that yet because I want to keep the channel open. I am writing back and forth to him, but I wanted you to know that. But they had it direct. We met their man. We delivered to their man in Moscow our letter to Ho Chi Minh. He took it back to Ho Chi Minh. Ho Chi Minh replied to me and said, "No go." Now we thought, though, that the fact that he never publicized that letter was an indication that he was weakening and he wanted to keep that channel open, and all this other stuff, the Pope and Wilson, we thought was just so much crap and we still think so. We think Kosygin wants to get out of it. We think he is damned anxious to get out of it, with the Chinese thing what it is, but he's embarrassed and can't do anything. Bobby comes along, though, and says he does . . .

Russell: Which letter was it that Ho Chi Minh answered and just spit in your face. Was that one prior letter?

President: That wasn't a letter to Ho Chi Minh. That was an offer, the first pause, the first 5-day one, and Bobby Kennedy was the author of that. That was the Bobby Kennedy pause. You can just tell him that when you were opposing it that he had more influence than you did, that he got the first pause: 5 days. Then he's got the next one for 35 days; 37. Then he's got the last one for 6 days. But nowhere, anytime, can he give you one damn word from Hanoi. Now they can quote preachers and teachers, and they can quote Kosygin and they can quote Wilson, and they can quote U Thant and Goldberg, but damned if you can get it from Ho Chi Minh, and Ho Chi Minh is talking to us and writing us and you know that he knows how to get a message to us if he wants to.

Russell: Well now, they're voting in there on Rule 22 and I've got to vote. Now, what part of this can I use other than this last one?

President: You can use every bit of it except Ho Chi Minh's letter, where I wrote Ho Chi Minh. You can say all the rest of it, and he . . .

⁵ Chester Ronning, a retired Canadian diplomat, was involved in an abortive peace effort during 1966.

Russell: Is it all right to say “have communicated with him through other sources”?

President: Yeah, yeah, sure, sure, sure, sure. And, the main thing is, he [Kennedy] says halt the bombardment and make it clear that we’ll negotiate, but we won’t wait long. Well, tell him we halted the bombardment in Tet, we made it clear we’d negotiate through Kosygin, and we did wait 6 damn days, period, and what he’s suggesting this week we’ve just finished doing 2 weeks ago over your protest. And they build up 50 days . . .

Russell: All right. I have some misgivings about getting into a debate with the little pissant, but I’ll see about it.⁶ Bye.

⁶ The President contacted Rusk on the day of Kennedy’s speech and requested that he formulate a reply to Kennedy. (Johnson Library, Recordings of Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and Rusk, March 2, 1967, 3:15 p.m., Tape F67.08, Side A, PNO 6 and 7) Rusk issued the following statement on March 2: “Proposals substantially similar to those put forward by Senator Kennedy were explored prior to, during, and since the Tet truce—all without result. We have had bombing pauses of 5 days in 1965; 37 days in December–January 1965–1966; and 6 days just 2 weeks ago—and we encountered only hostile actions in response. There is, therefore, no reason to believe at this time that Hanoi is interested in proposals for mutual de-escalation such as those put forward by Senator Kennedy. The President has consistently made clear that the door to peace is and will remain open and we are prepared at any time to go more than half way to meet any equitable overture from the other side.” (Department of State *Bulletin*, March 27, 1967, p. 516) The President also contacted Senator Everett Dirksen (R–IL) and Representative Carl Albert (D–OK) in an effort to further incite Congressional opposition to Kennedy’s proposal. Dirksen led the critical reaction to the Kennedy speech in the Senate, notably deriding the proposal as nothing new and declaring his support for the President’s policies in Vietnam. (Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and Albert, March 2, 1967, 3:30 p.m., Tape 67.08, Side B, PNO 1; and Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and Dirksen, March 2, 1967, 3:50 p.m., Tape F67.08, Side B, PNO 2) For additional background on the Kennedy speech and the debate that followed, see Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *Robert Kennedy and His Times* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), pp. 770–777.

97. Letter From President Johnson to Secretary of State Rusk¹

Washington, March 2, 1967.

Dear Dean:

Since I may not be in town when you see Ellsworth Bunker, I should like to tell you what I hope will prove possible in Saigon.²

I have decided that the best solution is to give General Westmoreland the over-all task of Ambassador while maintaining his military command. I want you and Bob McNamara to confirm that this is possible without Senate confirmation.

As you know, however, the bringing to life within the next six months of a constitutional government in Saigon is as important to us as the course of military events in the field. I have concluded that there is one American above any other who is qualified to guide this process on behalf of the nation; and I feel, in justice to our fighting men and to the country as a whole, that only our best is justified in the circumstances.

Therefore, I wish you to ask Ellsworth Bunker if he is willing to serve as Ambassador at Large in Saigon, assuming responsibility for our political policy under Westmoreland's general direction.

We would assign an aircraft to Ellsworth so that he could easily move about the area and return, as necessary, for consultations in Washington.

As you know, I envisage assigning Bob Komer to serve with Westmoreland to drive forward our civil operations in Saigon, in fields other than that assigned to Ellsworth. I would be prepared, if you agree, to strengthen further the political side of the Saigon Embassy by assigning Bill Sullivan to assist Ambassador Bunker in his work.

I am conscious, of course, of the sacrifice I am asking Ellsworth to make at the age of 72. I can only recall that Henry Stimson was almost 73 when he became our greatest Secretary of War, serving for five years.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXVII, Memos (B). No classification marking. Drafted by Rostow.

² The leading candidates as successor to Lodge continued, throughout the early spring, to be Ellsworth Bunker, McGeorge Bundy, and Westmoreland. As made clear in a February 14 message to Westmoreland from Wheeler, both he and McNamara supported the selection of Westmoreland as the new Ambassador to South Vietnam since the mission required "a MacArthur-type operation" of coordinated military and political plans. (JCS telegram 1190-67 to Saigon, February 14; Center for Military History, Papers of William C. Westmoreland, #13 History File [I], 27 Jan-25 Mar 67) In a February 27 memorandum to the President, Bundy withdrew his name and argued that, given Bunker's skills as a diplomat, he should be the top choice. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Walt Rostow, Vietnam—W.W. Rostow)

I have in mind that Ellsworth would serve for only a relatively short period and I'm hopeful that, if I assured him I would not ask him to serve as Stimson did until he is 78—at least in Viet Nam—he would do this for our country and for me. I do believe the task of political midwifery ahead is the highest possible challenge to the wisdom, discretion, strength, and tact which Ellsworth embodies uniquely.

I hope your full powers of persuasion will be brought to bear in laying our case before him, and that you and Ellsworth will feel free to come back to me with any refinements you may suggest in this proposal.³

Sincerely,

Lyndon B. Johnson

³ The President met with Rusk, McNamara, and Rostow that evening from 5:55 to 6:45 p.m., to discuss Westmoreland's appointment as successor to Lodge. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary) While no notes of the meeting have been found, according to Wheeler's comments to Westmoreland, both Rusk and McNamara now opposed Westmoreland's selection, particularly in light of Westmoreland's professed reluctance to give up his military status and rank in order to accept the post. Wheeler stated his preference for McNamara's recommendation that Westmoreland should remain in a military capacity. (JCS telegram 1637–67 to Saigon, March 3; Center for Military History, Papers of William C. Westmoreland, Message Files) During a March 9 news conference, the President denied that he was considering a replacement for Lodge. See *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1967*, Book I, p. 104. However, the decision on a successor was made within a week. In a speech before a joint session of the Tennessee State legislature on March 16, Johnson announced Bunker's appointment as the new Ambassador to South Vietnam, along with Eugene Locke's selection as the new Deputy Ambassador and Robert Komer's appointment as the new head of the pacification effort. See *ibid.*, pp. 352–353. The Senate confirmed Bunker's nomination on April 5. The new Ambassador presented his credentials in Saigon on April 28. Lodge's recommendations on the process of transition are in telegram 20988 from Saigon, March 22. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXVIII)

98. Editorial Note

On March 2, 1967, UN Secretary-General U Thant met with Colonel Ha Van Lau, head of the North Vietnamese delegation to the International Control Commission, at the house of Le Tung Son, North Vietnamese Consul in Burma. Thant suggested to Lau that "one avenue to settlement might be a stand down by all concerned of all military activities" and a "mutual grounding of arms," to which the North Vietnamese responded with some interest and expressed the desire to make the proceedings public. (Telegram 150826 to USUN, March 8; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69,

POL 27–14 VIET) According to a March 15 [*text not declassified*] report, in the meeting with Lau, Thant had also advised the North Vietnamese that the domestic peace movement would not change the attitude of the U.S. Government toward the conduct of the war. (Ibid., EA/ACA Files: Lot 69 D 277, Vietnam File—U.N.)

On March 6 Thant discussed that meeting with U.S. Representative Arthur Goldberg in New York. The previous day, Thant had given a press conference in which he called for the unconditional end of U.S. bombing, after which, he believed, talks would surely follow. See *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1967*, pages 872–873. North Vietnam later criticized Thant for making his proposal public before its leadership had a chance to reply and for the truce formula itself which “equated the aggressor and the victim of aggression.” (Memorandum from David Popper of the Bureau of International Organization Affairs to Rusk, March 29; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET)

Thant’s call for a truce generated a debate within the administration over the implementation of a cease-fire. In a March 7 memorandum to Walt Rostow, Robert Ginsburgh of the NSC Staff argued the likelihood that the North Vietnamese might use the Secretary-General’s proposal in order to consolidate gains in the field and strengthen their position at the bargaining table. The only cease-fire acceptable to the United States and South Vietnam would be one in which the Communists ceased entirely all military actions and infiltration in the South. (Ibid., POL 27 VIET S) A March 11 appraisal by Chester Cooper, Ambassador W. Averell Harriman’s assistant, suggested a new approach to de-escalation if a mutual stand-down came into effect. A verified withdrawal would occur before the cessation of bombing over North Vietnam, although infiltration routes in Laos would continue as active targeting areas. Bilateral discussions would follow this halt. (Ibid., POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER)

The Department of State was encouraged by the fact that the North Vietnamese had contacted Thant on their own initiative and had not rejected his offer. It instructed Goldberg to pursue the matter more extensively. (Telegram 152887 to USUN, March 10; *ibid.*, POL 27–14 VIET) However, there was strong opposition in the State Department to Goldberg’s further request to take the issue of Vietnam to the UN Security Council for deliberation. (Memorandum from Sisco to Rusk, March 15; *ibid.*, EA Files: Lot 74 D 246, United Nations—General) Any initiative along these lines awaited a favorable North Vietnamese response to Thant’s proposal.

99. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam¹

Washington, March 4, 1967, 5:43 p.m.

149111. Subject: Presidential Candidates.

1. We gather from our recent exchanges with you on this subject and from reports of informal conversations recently between Embassy officers and visitors from Washington agencies that current prospects are for a single military candidate, presumably opposed by one or more civilian candidates. We also understand that it is the Embassy's strong feeling at present that the military candidate is almost certain to win the presidential election in a fair contest but with the realistic recognition that he has the sizeable resources of the military and civilian bureaucracy behind him. We also have the impression that you find an increasing acceptance among civilian political groups of at least the inevitability, if not the desirability, of a military president, and that in fact there is growing civilian political activity to get behind the inevitable military candidate.²

2. If our reading of this assessment is correct, we consider that primary U.S. objective in forthcoming presidential elections should continue to be a fair and open contest between a military candidate and, hopefully, no more than one or two civilian candidates. In discussions with any and all Vietnamese we should make clear that USG is supporting no candidate but rather a fair contest. In our own thinking, we should certainly keep our options open should a civilian candidate succeed in winning presidency.

3. As we see it now, presidential race may face following problems:

a. *Agreement among military on single military candidate.* Our interest lies in ensuring that there is only one military presidential candidate. We should seek to avoid a Thieu–Ky ticket on grounds that it would represent “no change”, and we gather in any event that neither Thieu or Ky is inclined to become a vice presidential candidate or to serve as prime minister under the other. While both Thieu and Ky have their advantages and disadvantages, U.S. should not attempt to intervene in favor of either candidacy but be prepared to accept either one.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Priority; Exdis. Drafted by Miller, cleared in S/S, and approved by Unger. Repeated to Manila for Bundy.

² While accepting the inevitability of the military ticket's victory, the Department expressed the hope that the political base of South Vietnam could be expanded either at the legislature level or in the subsequent elections. (Telegram 152441 to Saigon, March 9; *ibid.*)

This of course assumes that emergence of either Thieu or Ky as military candidate will not create irreconcilable rifts within military establishment.

b. *Civilian participation in military ticket.* We believe it is important for military presidential candidate to include on his ticket a prominent, attractive civilian as his vice presidential candidate. We are also inclined to believe that military candidate, if successful, should name prominent civilian as prime minister. In selecting vice presidential candidate and a prime minister, military candidate would have to bear in mind importance of regional representation as well as selection of individuals with whom he can work as team.

c. *Military participation in civilian ticket.* Although civilian presidential candidate would probably select another civilian as his vice presidential running mate, it would be important for him to make clear his intentions of cooperating fully with military establishment and perhaps even of naming military man as prime minister. Should civilian candidate win election, problem would then be to ensure that military swung behind him with their full support.

d. *Naming of prospective Prime Minister.* While it might be normal for prime minister to be named only after elections, we wonder whether it would not be wiser if he were named beforehand, at same time candidates announce their platforms. In this way further scope is provided for balancing regional, religious and other interests and particularly for establishing civil-military balance. Believe this would have importance internally in South Viet-Nam and know it would be optically helpful on international scene.

4. We would welcome your comments on above.³

Rusk

³ In a reply to this message, Lodge offered his concurrence in these guidelines, especially since the success of the election lay in the maintenance of military unity and civilian participation, most likely at the prime ministerial position on the ticket (which would be named during the campaign in order to maximize the ticket's appeal). (Telegram 20032 from Saigon, March 10; *ibid.*)

100. Memorandum From the President's Special Consultant (Taylor) to President Johnson¹

Washington, March 6, 1967.

SUBJECT

A Constitutional Issue of Importance in Saigon
Ref. Saigon, 19209²

In his latest weekly cable, Ambassador Lodge refers to the proposal by General Thieu that the Constituent Assembly write into the Constitution a provision for a High Council for National Defense and the Armed Forces which would advise the President on matters related to national defense and give the military a way to make their voices heard and to set forth their aspirations in the national councils.

Our people in Saigon do not seem to be averse to this proposal but, because of my past troubles with the generals during the Khanh period, I must say that I would view it with real concern.

Cabot quotes Tran Van Huong on the subject, who as Prime Minister shared my experience with the generals in 1965—indeed, he lost his job to their intervention in his struggle with the Tri Quang Buddhists. His view is that such a Council, if imbedded in the Constitution, may interfere in the government in a destructive way. I must say that he has ground for that fear because of the following background of experience.

In the fall of 1964, after the failure of his Vung Tau constitution, Khanh and his generals (including Thieu and Ky) determined to withdraw from active participation in the government and to let their civilian critics take on the problems which had baffled them. They did so and from the sidelines enjoyed the spectacle of the struggle and fall of the Huong and Quat governments before the attacks of the various minority groups—offering the civilian leaders no help and sometimes contributing to their plight.³ Khanh could have saved Huong from the Buddhists but, instead, deliberately pulled the rug from under him.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Gen. Taylor (2 of 2). Confidential. In a covering note transmitting this memorandum to the President, Rostow wrote: "Herewith an interesting reaction of General Taylor's that I am flagging for Sect. Rusk, Sect. McNamara and (via the back channel) for Ambassador Lodge." The President wrote on this note: "This should go to Lodge earliest." (Ibid.) This memorandum was sent to Lodge by Rostow, who requested that Lodge comment on it, via CIA channels, in telegram CAP 67118 at 12:35 a.m. on March 7. (Ibid., Taylor Report of Overseas Operations & Misc. Memos) For Lodge's comments, see Document 102.

² Document 92.

³ Huong's government fell on January 27, 1965; Quat resigned as Prime Minister on June 11, 1965. See *Foreign Relations, 1964–1968*, volume II.

During this time, I often appealed to the generals to show more responsibility, to get behind the government and to accept appropriate posts in the cabinet. Their answer was that the Armed Forces should be outside the government and in a sense parallel with it, reporting only to the Chief of State. I often felt that many officers had in mind the Japanese pre-war pattern whereby the Armed Forces reported directly to the Emperor through their ministers who were professional military officers nominated by the Army and Navy. Khanh and his associates seemed to be seeking some similar arrangement for by-passing the civilian Prime Minister and his cabinet.

This problem disappeared after the exile of Khanh and the installation of the Ky Government with the backing of the military Directorate.⁴ The rather surprising stability of the Ky Government has been due to the fact that it has been underwritten by the generals who have accepted open responsibility for it. Such support in quality if not in form is essential to the survival of any government growing out of the new constitution.

With these thoughts in mind, I am somewhat alarmed by the emergence of this proposal from Thieu for a High Council which suggests that the Directorate may wish to move from a position in direct support of the government to one along side it in the manner of the Khanh concept. It may have been this suspicion which led to the reaction of Tran Van Huong who has a vivid memory of the events which I have recounted.

My suggestion would be to call the Saigon Embassy's attention to this past record and the implications which may lurk in the Thieu proposal and to urge our representatives to oppose this Council to the extent possible. If it cannot be shelved, it should at least be incorporated within the government—possibly by making it advisory concurrently to the Prime Minister, the National Security Council and the President in approximate analogy to the relationships of our JCS.

Having mentioned Tran Van Huong in the foregoing context, I might add a brief evaluation of the man since his name keeps turning up as a possible civilian candidate for President. I worked very closely with him during his troubled days as Prime Minister and developed a high regard for his character and integrity.

Having said that, I must quickly add that I do not think that he would make an adequate President if that official is to be a DeGaulle towering over a business manager-type Prime Minister on the Pompidou pattern. Huong has a record of a bad heart and as a consequence is physically weak and slow of movement. He looks and acts much

⁴ This event occurred in June 1965; see *ibid.*, vol. III, Document 9.

older than his years—actually about 60, I believe. He would never be a vigorous executive. As a result, in part at least, of his tribulations in office, he is violently anti-Buddhist (of the Tri Quang-type), anti-northern and anti-military. I doubt that he is big enough to soften such prejudices in the national interest if he becomes President.

On the positive side, Huong is honest, courageous, patriotic and listens well to advice. As Prime Minister, the official closest to him was the present Deputy Prime Minister, Dr. Nguyen Luu Vien, who complemented him very well.⁵

In summary, I would say that Huong, supported by a vigorous Prime Minister, could be an excellent representational Chief of State. He is not equipped to run the show in the manner of DeGaulle.

Maxwell D. Taylor

⁵ On March 2 Taylor discussed this issue with Komer. In a March 3 letter to U. Alexis Johnson, Komer mentioned the following: "General Taylor said he knew Tran Van Huong quite well, and had a rather mixed opinion of him. Huong was brave and determined, but was in quite poor health and moved slowly at best about the government's business. Taylor feared Huong would not make a dynamic, forceful President or Prime Minister. When I commented that the military might favor Nguyen Luu Vien as Prime Minister or Vice President, General Taylor gave Vien much higher marks than do our current interlocutors in Saigon. He recalled that Vien had done quite well as Huong's Interior Minister, had always been at Huong's side, and had been quite energetic. Admittedly, he has not seemed to show these qualities as Vice Premier in the current Ky regime, but this may be just because he lacks the power position." (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Komer Files: Lot 69 D 303, Vietnam/Turkey) In a letter replying to Komer, March 10, Johnson rated Vien as superior to Huong in terms of ability. "If, as I gather, Thieu or Ky are likely to be President, I would think that from our standpoint a Huong as Vice President and a Vien as Prime Minister would be a good combination," he noted. (Ibid.)

101. Telephone Conversation Between President Johnson and Secretary of State Rusk¹

Washington, March 6, 1967, 4:03 p.m.

[Here follows discussion between the President and Rusk about the defection of Stalin's daughter and a proposed meeting with Pat Dean.]

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and Rusk, March 6, 1967, 4:03 p.m., Tape 67.08, Side B, PNO 3. No classification marking. This transcript was prepared in the Office of the Historian specifically for this volume.

President: What does U Thant bring back?

Rusk: Based on his public statements, nothing at all. I expect he got out of the Vietnamese what we have already had directly from them. But we will know by 8:30 tonight.

President: Has he communicated with us at all?

Rusk: No, sir. U Thant—no, sir.

President: Are we seeing him at Goldberg's request?

Rusk: Yes, I think so.

President: What's the answer to Mansfield's charge that we ought to have a cease-fire with everybody? We offered to a dozen times, haven't we?

Rusk: We have if it is comprehensive enough but that standstill idea is almost impossible to work out in a guerrilla situation because the forces are all mixed up with each other and we can't give up access to all the district towns and provincial capitals and things of that sort. That is an extremely complicated matter to work out practically on the ground. I think we ought to really concentrate on the infiltration problem because that is the heart of the matter and take on this other business of the cease-fire in connection with amnesty and reconciliation and that kind of thing. Otherwise, we'd be in an impossible military and supply situation out there.

President: Have we ever gotten Bobby's² analyzed carefully where we were sure we've tried the identical thing during the pause?

Rusk: I have gone over it pretty thoroughly and it's quite clear that Hanoi would say that his proposal is an ultimatum. The same thing with Findley.³ I don't know whether you have seen the tickers, but Findley apparently dropped off a proposal to you today along the same lines—that we tell the other side that we have an Ambassador in Rangoon or some place that will talk with them, and if they don't talk with us immediately during a short bombing pause, we just go all out and blast them off the face of the earth. Well, that's the whole point here—the attitude of the other side toward what they consider to be an ultimatum. It just wouldn't get anywhere at all and we know that from the most recent experience.

President: Okay. I'll see you tomorrow. We'll have lunch tomorrow.

² Reference is to the peace proposal Robert Kennedy made in his March 2 speech; see footnote 2, Document 96.

³ Representative Paul Findley (R-IL).

102. Telegram From the Ambassador to Vietnam (Lodge) to the President's Special Assistant (Rostow)¹

Saigon, March 10, 1967.

CAS 3781. 1. Thanks for sending me the interesting memo from General Taylor to the President.² Following are my comments on it.

2. I share Max's concern that the military be positively involved in the new government with clearly stated responsibilities and that they not be allowed to become a separate, irresponsible and possibly hostile group on the outside. If the military are not properly employed by the new government, with both military nation-building skills and military loyalties well engaged, they will surely become a destructive element and will place the survival of the future government in jeopardy.

3. With regard to the Military Council which has now been written into the constitution, I see General Taylor's point, and I think it well to keep in mind the unhappy experience of the Huong government. However, I do not think that the Huong experience should cause us to oppose the formation of the body as it is presently envisaged. In the first place, the Council as defined in the constitution now, has somewhat reduced functions from those specified in the Directorate's letter. The Assembly has carefully put the Council on the same level as other advisory councils and called it a "Military Council" rather than a "High Council for National Defense and the Armed Forces." The function of the Military Council is to "advise the President in matters relating to the armed forces, especially the promotion, transfer and disciplining of soldiers of all ranks." In this sense it could be a step towards more civilian control.

4. Secondly, I think we are going to have some such body either as a part of the constitutional machinery or outside of it. The military feel the need for an organizational means to act on the political scene, and they will insist on having it. It seems to me that the chances of controlling and limiting the role of such an organization are improved if it is defined and embodied in the formal governmental structure.

5. The body which now plays this role is the Armed Forces Council. It is the organizational base for military-political power. It is also the chief structural means for maintaining military unity. As such, it has proved a major source of whatever stability and progress the Ky

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 15 VIET S. Secret; Nodis. Sent through CIA channels. The text printed here is a re-typed copy sent under cover of a March 10 note from Rostow to Rusk.

² Document 100.

regime has realized. Folding this body into an elected constitutional regime will not be easy. A constitutional military council to advise the President seems to us to have the most chance of success, and it is the form which the Assembly has adopted.

6. It seems most likely to us that the winning candidate in the forthcoming elections will be a military man. If this is the case, the transformation of the present armed forces council into a constitutional body will be easier and safer. What we hope to see formed is a body which will bring military support and military talents to the regime while at the same time avoiding excessive military domination of the government. This is, of course, the military-civilian partnership which we have discussed in previous messages. At the outset the chances are that the military council will exercise rather more power than the language of the constitution might seem to provide. However, as institutions mature and the nation moves into a peacetime situation, the advice of the Military Council to the President could become a less weighty factor in his decisions.

7. General Taylor fears that the military may wish to move from a position of direct support for the government to a position "alongside it in the manner of the Khanh concept." It is unlikely that any elected government will enjoy the complete military support which a military government can command. But this is a matter of degree. While Huong got virtually no military support, we expect that the future government under the constitution will have considerable military backing, particularly if the winning candidate is a military man. The new government will in effect be sponsored by the military. This was previously not Huong's situation. Constitutional arrangements for a military council should help to keep the military involved in the government rather than "alongside it" as a separate and undoubtedly hostile entity.

8. I am in general agreement with General Taylor's estimate of Tran Van Huong as a political leader. He seems to be an honest, courageous man with much to recommend him. Although he is handicapped by poor health and by representational chief of state, [sic] leaving the business of government to a Prime Minister who is more vigorous and more capable or compromise. As a practical matter, however, such a formula seems to be ruled out by the fact that the constitution as it has been written virtually demands that the Chief of State be the effective Chief Executive. The constitution gives the Prime Minister very little power and vests all the important executive functions in the President.

103. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, March 10, 1967, 1135Z.

20060. 1. Ambassador and Bundy met alone with Thieu today. Following were highlights.

2. Bundy said GVN should have no doubt that President adhered to basic position he had stated at Manila,² that pressure must continue to be applied before Hanoi could be expected to change its attitude, while at the same time we stayed completely alert for any implication of change in Hanoi's position. It was now clear from December and January events that Hanoi was negative for the time being, so that we were proceeding with continued and somewhat increased pressures including additional measures against the North.

3. Thieu expressed gratitude for these assurances and said he completely agreed with this analysis. He thought that if we were able to maintain military successes, go forward with pacification, and complete Constitution and elections, Hanoi might conceivably change its attitude during 1967. At same time, he repeated theme stated to Goldberg, that if we did not maintain pressures Hanoi would simply continue propaganda and stress guerrilla and terrorist operations during 1967 lying low in order to resume more significant military action to arouse US and other public opinion during 1968.

4. Thieu specifically asked that President be informed he definitely intended to proceed with reconciliation proclamation at time Constitution was promulgated. He said that advance work was proceeding well, and that this timing now appeared clearly right.

5. Thieu then dwelt at length on role of ARVN in pacification. He said that army officers now accepted vital importance of pacification and that this was real area where war would be won. Substantial battalions had already been committed, and retraining for all battalions to be devoted to pacification would be completed by July. He said regimental commanders in particular felt strongly that they should have wider responsibility than mere security, and that they were therefore working on a command system that would place regimental commanders in overall charge of given areas with RD cadre and other organizations under them. He appeared to be saying that province chiefs would be under regimental commanders in areas where ARVN forces

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Priority; Exdis. Received at 10:13 a.m. and passed to the White House, DOD, and CIA at 10:40 a.m.

² Reference is to the Manila Conference; see footnote 3, Document 92.

were on regimental scale, but that province chiefs would have control where only single battalions were committed. In any case, he said vital thing was to have single man in charge in each area. He indicated this concept differed from proposals put forward by General Thang, but said that he had recently visited areas in First and Fourth Corps areas and had thereafter persuaded Thang these changes were necessary (apparently from Thang's idea that had placed province chiefs in more control position throughout).

Thieu went over this ground at some length, and Bundy expressed understanding of this explanation. (Ambassador will comment separately on these issues including their possible relation to pending decree on command structure for pacification and to sudden Thang selection to head GVN mission to Brazil inauguration.)³

6. Thieu's second major topic concerned behavior of ARVN and importance of new unit messing arrangements. He noted that previous system had given military men piaster allowance, which they had then passed on to their wives leaving themselves inadequate ration capacity which in turn led to local thievery of food and other bad behavior. He said this new arrangement, for which he took personal credit, will produce great improvement in ARVN relations with local populations, particularly as they stayed for long period in order to accomplish true pacification. Bundy noted that he had discussed issue with MACV, which of course wholly endorsed concept. He also noted that we understood DOD had pending proposal to assist in furnishing adequate rations.

7. Ambassador noted that even with military successes VC terrorism continued and assassinations of village chiefs were actually rising. Thieu agreed that this was so, and noted recent VC emphasis on attacks on RD cadres. He thought this was part of VC attempt to clog progress of pacification, which was of course fundamental to success.

8. Conversation did not touch on political situation. Thieu appeared in general very self-assured and relaxed.

Lodge

³ Not further identified.

104. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, March 10, 1967, 1136Z.

20059. 1. Immediately following meeting with Thieu reported septel, Ambassador and Bundy met with Ky. Bui Diem was also present.

2. Bundy began by giving Ky same assurances of USG position that he had given Thieu. Ky expressed agreement and hoped that we would continue to apply increasing pressures against the North as well as in the South.

3. Ky then discussed with Ambassador current episode of released American civilians claiming they had obtained release through bribery of special court. Ky noted that release had of course been his own personal decision based on representations by Ambassador. He said GVN had now clearly confirmed total absence of any bribery element, and that this had been made clear to Vietnamese people. Ky said that he had also explained situation to UPI representative responsible for story. Bui Diem noted that he had sent facts to Washington to assist in setting record straight at U.S. end.

4. Ky discussed Constitution and election prospects at length. He and Bui Diem thought Constitution would be completed by end of March and that final negotiation with Directorate would permit promulgation toward end of April. Ky noted that Assembly members appeared to desire five-month period before Presidential elections and then additional period before Assembly elections, to permit them to get organized better. He himself favored three-month schedule, with further interval of at least two months between Presidential and Assembly elections, latter being minimum time required to get mechanics worked out properly. With these factors, he himself now thought clearly in terms of aiming at September 11 anniversary date for Presidential elections (he laughingly noted this was his own lucky day), with Assembly elections to follow so that by the end of the year a full constitutional government would be established. If this could be accomplished, and if elections could be conducted as honestly as last year (point which Ambassador and Bundy had interjected), he thought it must have major effect in weakening any remaining VC appeal to South Vietnamese. GVN would have demonstrated it had best program.

5. Ky then said that key to situation remained elimination from SVN of all elements sent down by Hanoi. This could only be worked

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Priority; Exdis. Received at 9:19 a.m. and passed to the White House, DOD, and CIA at 9:50 a.m.

out with Hanoi (clear implication being that any direct dealing with NLF as such could only come thereafter, although he, like Thieu, explicitly endorsed both general reconciliation appeal and efforts to persuade middle and high-level VC to defect). Ky said that if Northern forces of all types were withdrawn, GVN would definitely be in shape to handle remaining NLF/VC terrorists and guerrilla problem. Ambassador and Bundy noted that getting Northerners of all sorts out was in large part a question of good intelligence information, and told Ky about extensive photographs of North Vietnamese military and other leaders in VC which MACV had just reported captured in Junction City Operation.² It was noted that this material could also be put to excellent use underscoring again NVN role and control of VC.

6. Ambassador then asked Ky for his judgment as to validity of current intelligence estimates that VC remained capable of recruiting 7,000 men per month in the South. Ky responded that he thought VC might still be able to get these numbers, but that this was being done solely by force and intimidation and without any remaining affirmative appeal or conviction. In effect, recruits in the South were now simply terrorized into service, and results must become visible soon in terms of their performance. He also confirmed that recent recruits included substantial numbers of teenagers and even women. He (like Thieu) thought that VC was now under very heavy pressure indeed from casualties and general hardship, and he particularly noted serious morale impact of B-52 operations, of which he had just seen one vivid piece of evidence in the form of a poem captured with a medium-level NVA officer in Kon Tum, to effect that his condition was nearer death than life.

7. Finally, Ky referred to ARVN behavior, and said that he was directing increased use of summary discipline and even execution powers conferred by recent decree. He said these powers would be used against soldiers engaged in stealing or other crimes affecting the population.

8. In general, Ky appeared poised and self-assured, like Thieu.

Lodge

² Operation Junction City, begun on February 22, was a massive combined U.S.-ARVN assault against the Viet Cong stronghold in War Zone C northwest of Saigon in the area of Tay Ninh Province bordering Cambodia.

105. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, March 10, 1967, 3:45 p.m.

Mr. President:

1. As you instructed, I shall find an occasion to talk with Sec. Rusk about Sec. McNamara's views as expressed in his paper on Senator Kennedy's proposal.²

2. Herewith the clearest view I can give you of Sec. McNamara's thought, derived from many conversations over a considerable period of time.

3. First and above all, as I told you on the telephone, he is deeply troubled about the possibility that the war will run on into next year; and then political pressures will arise, in one form or another, that would force us into an unsatisfactory settlement unworthy of what the nation has put into the struggle. Therefore, he is in a great hurry—as are we all.

4. He is now even willing to contemplate the possibility of forcing a major crisis with the Soviet Union and Communist China by mining the Haiphong harbor and otherwise interdicting supplies from outside North Viet Nam. He has certainly not decided to propose this course of action to you. But he has talked to me about it at least three times as one possibility we should contemplate in the spring, after we have the Vietnamese constitution and the electoral slate settled. Like all of us, he hesitates to recommend this because of the risk of enlarging the war; although he keeps coming back to the CIA intelligence estimate that neither China nor Russia would go to war if we mined Haiphong.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Walt Rostow, Sen. Robert Kennedy's Position on VN—Analysis of. Literally Eyes Only. The notation "L" on the memorandum indicates that the President saw it.

² In light of the DRV's public and private statements, on March 2 Kennedy had called for the administration to cease bombing and offer to open talks with the North Vietnamese, after which both sides could then work toward a comprehensive and inclusive settlement as an international presence replaced U.S. ground forces. Rostow derided Kennedy's supposedly innovative proposal as a "conditional halt" that was "part of the same family of proposals we have made since the first bombing pause in May 1965." (Memorandum from Rostow to the President, March 9; *ibid.*) In a March 9 memorandum to the President, McNamara included a summation of his own doubts about the search for peace and a recommendation of a reduction in bombing that could overcome the distrust generated in Hanoi by the December raids. (*Ibid.*, Country File, Vietnam, Sen. Robert F. Kennedy Speech 3/2/67 & the Today Show interview, 3/7/67) Rusk was opposed to the Kennedy plan, since North Vietnam had rejected all its stipulations numerous times. He advised implementing a temporary suspension when "a serious prospect of peace opens up." (Letter from Rusk to the President, March 10; *ibid.*)

5. But his main thrust is to seek a quick end to the war by action which does not run the risks involved in mining Haiphong. He has some hopes that the present high casualty rates being inflicted on the VC plus high levels of defection will force some kind of crack in the organizational and political structure of the NLF. But he is conscious that we have not sustained these high rates over a long enough period to give him confidence that the war will end in 1967 as a result of casualty and defection rates. He is frustrated but does not know what he can do from here about the slow pace of pacification.

6. Against this background—of one course of action which may be too dangerous and another which may be too slow—he is passionately interested in finding a way to negotiate an end to the war:

—He has pressed (and I have worked with him) to find a way of penetrating and making contact with the NLF. (I recently checked. This operation is being carried forward in a vigorous and imaginative way, although we don't yet have any big fish on the hook.)

—He wants us to push hard on the KGB contact in New York as well as on U Thant's approach.

—He is, as his memorandum to you of March 9 reveals, willing to cut down bombing in the North if it can induce a negotiation with Hanoi, notably bombing north of the 20th parallel.

7. This judgment, in turn, stems from a view that the positive effect of bombing in the northern part of North Viet Nam is not enough to outweigh its negative effects on public opinion here and abroad and on the leaders in Hanoi. He honestly believes—without independent evidence—that our bombing around Hanoi stiffens the resistance of the people in authority there and makes it harder for them to negotiate an end to the war. As his memorandum suggests, he tends to accept the theory that our bombing attacks of December 13–14 were damaging to negotiations.

8. In short, I don't think Bob can be described as a "dove" in this matter. He wants the Viet Nam operation to succeed because of the nation's stake in it; your stake in it; and—perhaps—his stake in it. He is afraid it is endangered by the passage of time. He is thrashing about for a short cut. Among the short cuts would be to use our bombing of the North—especially north of the 20th parallel—as a negotiating carrot since, in his judgment, it has very limited net value.

9. My main difference with him is that I am not sure his picture of the mind of the men in Hanoi is correct. I agree that they are probably split; but I cannot believe—until I see hard evidence—that our bombing in the northern part of Viet Nam is a decisive factor in determining when they would try seriously to get out of the war. Moreover, I do believe that if we are systematic about electric power we can do something significant about their war effort.

10. My advice would be to support Bob in his efforts to ensure that every possible negotiating track is explored; unleash his full energies—perhaps after the Guam meeting³—at trying to accelerate pacification; but exercise great caution in surrendering prematurely or without adequate compensation our bombing in the North. In addition, you may wish to look hard and afresh at a political-military diplomatic plan for forcing a major crisis some time late in the spring.

Walt

P.S. Since dictating this, Bob called and talked at length about the scenario stated briefly in his memo of March 9:

—take out all eight power plants and cement in the next two weeks;

—go to the Russians and tell them we're cutting back to the 20th parallel for a while;

—see if the Russians can start secret talks between Tommy⁴ and a very high Hanoi official.

W.

³ See Documents 115 and 116.

⁴ Llewellyn Thompson.

106. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam¹

Washington, March 13, 1967, 7:35 p.m.

154248. For Lodge from the Secretary. I have discussed with the President your telegrams on the possible visit of Thieu and Ky to Guam. We do not wish to press the matter in view of your strong misgivings.²

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 7 GUAM. Top Secret; Immediate; Nodis; Eyes Only. Drafted and approved by Rusk and cleared by Read and by Walt Rostow over the telephone.

² In a March 10 memorandum to Rostow, Jorden also argued against the invitation. "If the Vietnamese leaders are invited, I am convinced the outcome will be detrimental for our President," he warned. The trip would be viewed as an intervention in Vietnamese politics, the GVN would appear as if "being summoned to report," and "resentment" would arise from allied nations that were left out of the conference. (Johnson Library, National Security File, International Meetings and Travel File, President's Trip to Guam (Conference) [II]) Regarding the Guam meetings, see Documents 115 and 116.

I do think you should consider the possibility that Thieu and Ky might themselves be offended if the President comes as close as Guam and does not give them a chance to see him. Please consider whether it would be wise for you to discuss this matter with them, go over the advantages and disadvantages so that they would fully understand why they have not already received an official invitation. I have some feeling that if they do not come it should be their decision. They are the leaders of the country which the fighting is all about, they have over 400,000 American troops in their country and the Commander-in-Chief of those forces would be some four to five hours flying time from Saigon. We might get the worst of both worlds if they now take offense publicly about not being invited. If your analysis is correct, we might get the best of both worlds if they consider the matter and decide not to come.

On balance, our view here is that there is some advantage in their coming but it is sufficiently close as not to cause us to press the matter against you who know most about it. I would appreciate one further indication of your views on this particular message.³ Sometime one can even toss a coin. Regards.

Rusk

³ In telegram 20291, March 13, Lodge concurred with Rusk's view on the matter. He suggested that he tell the GVN leadership the following: "We have not extended a formal invitation because this is primarily a U.S. stock-taking on the state of our different programs, and it is not a meeting at which major new decisions are expected. I would not, therefore, expect a very full communiqué. On the other hand, if you do want to come, we will be delighted to give you a very cordial welcome." (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 7 GUAM) In a March 15 speech, the President mentioned that the South Vietnamese could attend the Guam discussions but only "if it were convenient for them." Thieu and Ky did accept the "invitation." For text of the March 15 speech, see *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1967*, Book I, pp. 348–354. The scheduled meetings did cause some turmoil inside Vietnam. Ky tried to counteract negative publicity stemming from the news of the conference by staging "spectacular" public protests against "false peace" on the streets of Saigon, which the Department requested that Lodge intercede to cancel. (Telegrams 20406 from Saigon and 155939 to Saigon, March 15; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 7 GUAM)

107. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassies in Vietnam, Korea, Australia, the Philippines, New Zealand, and Thailand¹

Washington, March 15, 1967, 1:20 p.m.

155315. Following is text of Aide-Mémoire handed Amb. Goldberg by Secretary-General, March 14, 1967:²

Begin Text

On many occasions in the past the Secretary General of the United Nations has expressed his very great concern about the conflict in Vietnam. That concern is intensified by the growing fury of the war resulting in the corresponding loss of life, indescribable suffering and misery of the people, appalling devastation of the country, uprooting of society, astronomical sums spent on the war and last but not least, his deepening anxiety over the increasing threat to the peace of the world. For these reasons, in the past three years or so, he submitted ideas and proposals to the parties primarily involved in the war with a view to creating conditions congenial for negotiations which unhappily have not been accepted by the parties. The prospects for peace seem to be as distant today than ever before.

Nevertheless, the Secretary General reasserts his conviction that a cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam continues to be a vital need, for moral and humanitarian reasons and also because it is the step which could lead the way to meaningful talks to end the war.

The situation being as it is today, the Secretary General has now in mind proposals envisaging three steps:

- (a) A general standstill truce
- (b) Preliminary talks
- (c) Reconvening of the Geneva Conference

In the view of the Secretary General, a halt to all military activities by all sides is a practical necessity, if useful negotiations are to be undertaken. Since the Secretary General's three-point plan has not been accepted by the parties, he believes that a general standstill truce by all parties to the conflict is now the only course which could lead to fruitful negotiations. It must be conceded that a truce without effective supervision is apt to be breached from time to time by one side or an-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Priority; Exdis. Drafted and approved by Read. Repeated to Moscow, New Delhi, Warsaw, Ottawa, and London.

² U Thant asked the Indian Government to convey this aide-mémoire directly to Hanoi. (Telegram 4434 from USUN, March 16; *ibid.*) The Department of State publicly released the message on March 28.

other, but an effective supervision of truce, at least for the moment, seems difficult to envisage as a practical possibility. If the parties directly involved in the conflict are genuinely motivated by considerations of peace and justice, it is only to be expected that earnest effort must be exerted to enforce the truce to the best of their ability. Should a public appeal by the Secretary General in his personal capacity facilitate the observance of such a truce, he would gladly be prepared to do so. Appeals to that effect by a group of countries would also be worthy of consideration.

Once the appeal has been made and a general standstill truce comes into effect, the parties directly involved in the conflict should take the next step of entering into preliminary talks. While these talks are in progress, it is clearly desirable that the general standstill truce will continue to be observed. In the view of the Secretary General these talks can take any of the following forms:

- (1) Direct talks between the United States of America and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam
- (2) Direct talks between the two Governments mentioned in (1) above, with the participation of the two Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference of 1954
- (3) Direct talks between the two Governments mentioned in (1) with the participation of the members of the International Control Commission
- (4) Direct talks between the two Governments mentioned in (1), with the participation of the two Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference of 1954 and of the members of the International Control Commission.

The Secretary General believes that these preliminary talks should aim at reaching an agreement on the modalities for the reconvening of the General Conference, with the sole purpose of returning to the essentials of that Agreement as repeatedly expressed by all parties to the conflict. These preliminary talks should seek to reach agreement on the time, place, agenda and participants in the subsequent formal meeting—the reconvening of the Geneva Conference. The Secretary General deems it necessary to stress that the question of participants in the formal negotiations should not obstruct the way to settlement. It is a question which could be solved only by agreeing that no fruitful talks on ending the war in Vietnam could take place without involving all those who are actually fighting. Since the Government in Saigon as well as the National Front of Liberation of South Vietnam are actually engaged in military operations, it is the view of the Secretary General that a future formal conference could not usefully discuss the effective termination of all military activities and the new political situation that would result in South Vietnam without the participation of representatives of the Government of Saigon and representatives of the National Front of Liberation of South Vietnam.

In transmitting these proposals to the parties directly concerned, the Secretary General believes that he is acting within the limits of his good offices, purely in his private capacity. He hopes that the divergent positions held by the parties both on the nature of the conflict and the ultimate political objectives will not prevent them from giving their very serious attention to these proposals. Indeed, he takes this opportunity to appeal to them to give their urgent consideration to his proposal. *End Text.*

You will receive by septel interim US reply and draft final reply of USG for your consultation with GVN and allied governments.

For Seoul

Secretary Rusk gave Prime Minister Chung³ text of aide-mémoire in conversation held morning of March 15 but you may wish to duplicate with Foreign Ministry.

Rusk

³ Chong Il-Kwon, Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea.

108. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassies in Vietnam, Korea, Australia, the Philippines, New Zealand, and Thailand and the Mission to the United Nations¹

Washington, March 15, 1967, 7:58 p.m.

155940. On March 14 Secretary General U Thant handed Ambassador Goldberg Aide-Mémoire containing new Vietnam proposal, repeated to you septel.²

In view of significance of subject contained in Aide-Mémoire, Ambassador Goldberg is informing SYG on March 16 as set forth at end of this cable, that USG appreciates constructive efforts on his part to bring about a peaceful settlement of the Vietnam conflict, and we are consulting GVN and troop contributor allies.

We have studied SYG's proposal carefully and agree that in light of fact it already in hands of ICC powers and Geneva Co-Chairmen, that Hanoi is expected to have it within 24 hours and will probably re-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Priority. Drafted by Sisco; cleared by Eugene Rostow, Walt Rostow, Harriman, Unger, Read, and McNamara; and approved by Rusk. Repeated to Moscow, New Delhi, Warsaw, Ottawa, and London.

² Document 107.

act soon, we should make prompt and constructive full reply to SYG in writing. Our draft reply is also contained herein. Request you to bring this matter promptly to attention action addressee governments.

Allies urged to hold this matter very tightly since leaks could jeopardize whatever chances of success proposals may have.

We recognize SYG has backed away from his three-point proposal which centered on US initiation cessation of bombing³ and has substituted new three-point proposal with reciprocal action to bring about a standstill truce.

We estimate it unlikely Hanoi would be able to accept SYG proposition. But even in unlikely event it were, we would still have gained advantage of Hanoi agreement to move towards a cessation of all hostilities and not just half the war.

There are, of course, practical difficulties in SYG's proposal. In view of the general nature of the SYG's Aide-Mémoire, we do not know clearly and precisely what he means by a standstill truce and how its various elements can be put into effect. For example, does his proposal include cessation of large unit activities and guerrilla activities alike? Does it include terrorist acts as well as cessation of the bombing? Does it include a cessation of infiltration? Will movement of large and small units within South Vietnam be precluded? What method is proposed for supervision of those aspects of a standstill which are not clearly observable, e.g., clandestine reinforcement or movement? Would it be possible to establish some type of international supervision of demilitarized zones and on the borders of South Vietnam to prevent violation of the agreement? These are obviously unanswered questions which can only be clarified by detailed discussions. Moreover, we would wish to make sure that any standstill did not interfere with the South Vietnamese Government's authority to pursue normal governmental activities without interference throughout South Vietnam.

Nevertheless, we are ready as the President has said to go more than half way. We have drafted what we believe to be a forthcoming and constructive reply which we wish to make available to SYG promptly after consultations with GVN and Allies. You should bring draft letter to their attention, solicit their ideas, but make every effort to avoid any implication they will have veto of final text. Make clear we consider it necessary make early reply and therefore need their

³ U Thant presented his original three-point proposal on June 20, 1966. In this earlier formulation, the first and most important step was the cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam; the second was the scaling down of all military activities by all sides; and the third was the likelihood of discussions between all belligerent parties to the conflict. See *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1966*, p. 819.

views promptly. Allies should understand draft has been developed on assumption this reply may have to be surfaced at an appropriate stage.

Suggested draft US reply:

"The United States appreciates the efforts of the SYG to help bring about a peaceful settlement and end the conflict in Vietnam. We have carefully studied the Aide-Mémoire transmitted to Ambassador Goldberg by the Secretary General on March 14, 1967, and we want to express our appreciation for the constructive proposals he has made.

"The United States agrees it would be desirable to establish as quickly as possible 'a general standstill truce' which on the basis of the Aide-Mémoire of March 14 we understand to mean 'a halt to all military activities by all parties'. As the Secretary General appreciates, for such a truce to be effective, it is important that both sides understand precisely what its principal elements are and the steps to be taken by both sides to assure an end to all violence and effective supervision. The US believes, therefore, that it would be helpful if the full details were discussed with representatives of North Viet Nam, the Geneva Conference Co-Chairmen, other interested governments or the SYG, and the US is prepared to enter into such discussions promptly and constructively.

"The United States would also be prepared, as suggested by the Secretary General, to enter into preliminary talks.

"All four of the forms of preliminary talks described in the Secretary General's Aide-Mémoire or other possibilities would be acceptable to the United States.

"You can be assured, Mr. Secretary General, as President Johnson has frequently said, that the United States will go more than half-way to achieve peace in Vietnam." *End Text.*

Addressees should also note SYG's proposal contemplates preliminary talks only for purpose of reconvening Geneva Conference. We believe preliminary talks would be even more useful if they addressed themselves to difficult problem of SYG's first proposal—a standdown. For this reason, we do not feel it necessary at this time to raise difficult problem re NLF representation at Geneva Conference in formal written reply.

Our suggestion for handling this is to have Goldberg in the course of his conversation with SYG state orally that if we reach the stage of a Geneva conference, the question of hearing the views of the NLF should not be insurmountable problem, as President Johnson has said frequently.

We note also SYG refers only to 1954 accord and we request Ambassador Goldberg to point this out today to SYG at time he provides him with interim reply given below.⁴ He should note that Co-Chairmen

⁴ Goldberg delivered the U.S. aide-mémoire at 5:45 p.m. on March 16. He reiterated to Thant the necessity to refer to both Geneva accords so that a peaceful solution could be achieved for all of Indochina. (Telegram 4417 from USUN, March 16; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 Viet S)

at their recent London meeting included in communiqué reference to restoration of conditions contemplated in both accords of 1954 and 1962. We would see considerable difficulty in any settlement which would permit Communists to concentrate efforts against Laos.

In the meantime, we request Goldberg to present to SYG today following interim US reply in writing.

Begin Text. The US welcomes the proposal of the Secretary General which contains constructive and positive elements toward bringing about a peaceful settlement of the Vietnam conflict. The US is in the process of consulting the government of South Vietnam and its allies. We expect to provide the Secretary General with a full and prompt reply. *End Text.*⁵

For Saigon.

SYG has now given Aide-Mémoire to GVN observer in New York for transmission to his Government. You should say to GVN, in presenting foregoing, that we will also want to discuss with them their reply.

Rusk

⁵ The interim reply is printed in *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1967*, p. 885. On March 18 Goldberg transmitted a statement to Thant which reads in part: "As the Secretary-General knows, the United States and other Governments have, over many months, approached Hanoi, both publicly and privately, with proposals to end the conflict in Vietnam. To date, all such efforts have been rebuffed. The Government of North Vietnam has refused to agree to discussions without preconditions or to take reciprocal actions leading toward a cessation of hostilities. For this reason, the Government of the United States would be most interested in learning whether Hanoi is willing to enter into such discussions or to take reciprocal actions leading to peace in Vietnam. The United States has been, and remains willing to enter into discussions without preconditions with Hanoi at any time. To this end, the United States accepts the three-step proposal in the Aide-Mémoire of the Secretary-General of 14 March 1967." The full text of this statement is printed *ibid.*, pp. 886–887. Both U.S. replies were released by the Department on March 28.

109. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam¹

Washington, March 17, 1967, 1:29 a.m.

157069. Guam Talking Paper—Negotiations and Peaceful Settlement.²

I. The Issue

We will have a restricted session at dinner the first day to discuss this topic and will wish to open discussions ourselves. Since the Manila Conference, Hanoi has opened an intensive propaganda and diplomatic campaign centering on the terms for initiating talks, and this has important implications for our own and the GVN's handling of this issue, both publicly and in private. Although the GVN feels it is in a stronger bargaining position than a year ago, it is still apprehensive that it might appear to be outdistanced by the US in the peace offensive and is uneasy that the prospect of any premature or ill-considered negotiations might deflect military pressure from Hanoi, create new political complications at home, or otherwise work to the enemy's advantage. Our own position on negotiations and settlement is considerably more developed than that of the GVN and our vulnerabilities less acute. Hence the need for reassurance and a frank exchange of views. (A separate talking paper will deal with the U Thant proposal; its preparation will be delayed to take account of last minute developments.)³

II. Proposed US Position

1. We are intent upon maintaining the closest possible degree of consultation during the coming period when the prospect for initiating negotiations appears to be rising, even though it is far from imminent.

2. We have noted with satisfaction that the GVN feels it is now in a better position to tackle this question and that it has made forthcoming statements of willingness to talk with Hanoi without conditions (e.g. Ky's January 6 statement).⁴ The purpose of our sustained

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 7 GUAM. Secret; Immediate; Exdis. Drafted and approved by Unger and cleared by R.L. Bruce (S/S) and Isham.

² The proposed agenda and the briefing papers for the conference are in a notebook prepared for Rostow on March 21. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXVIII, Memos)

³ Not found.

⁴ The Prime Minister stated that he would be willing to talk with a representative of North Vietnam in a third country. (*The New York Times*, January 8, 1967)

military measures and economic support is to provide a sound basis for a political statement.

3. We agree with the GVN judgment that the Communists respect force and probably will be compelled to negotiate only when they are convinced they cannot win their objectives on the battlefield.

4. Without prejudice to continued military and pacification operations, we believe contingency planning on negotiations should be vigorously carried forward in order to have the best possible preparation should the other side make a serious move toward talks. There are many complicated and delicate issues involved and it is not too soon to bring our best joint thinking to bear.

5. Political and economic progress in South Viet-Nam is directly related to strengthening our hand on negotiations. It is vital that the forthcoming presidential elections be conducted in such a way as to support this objective. For the same reason we should move strongly ahead with National Reconciliation.

6. It is important for the GVN to play a conspicuous part in the search for peace. We would hope that more attention could be given to publicizing the six essential elements of peace put forward by the GVN at Manila, including (a) cessation of aggression, (b) preservation of the territorial integrity of South Viet-Nam, (c) reunification of Viet-Nam, (d) resolution of internal problems, (e) removal of allied military forces, and (f) effective guarantees.

III. Background

Elements within the GVN, notably Foreign Minister Do, are troubled by the Government's lack of a coherent policy on the substance of negotiations and settlement. Others, particularly among the military, have reacted against the so-called "false peace" proposals by others which, they fear, might lead to an indefensible neutrality or NLF domination of a coalition. Thieu has reiterated GVN refusal to talk with the NLF. Some GVN leaders suspect that the pressure of 1968 elections will cause the US to soften its position prematurely. They have remained skittish about National Reconciliation although useful preparatory work has been done (see separate paper). For all these reasons it would be useful to present our own assessments, review our position including our pledge to consult them fully and urge the GVN to begin more systematic contingency planning in close consultation with us.⁵

Rusk

⁵ In telegram 20623 from Saigon, March 17, Lodge reported the concurrence of the Mission in the views of the paper. The Ambassador did urge the inclusion of the GVN in planning for the contingency of negotiations, but warned that the Saigon leaders would consider any effort to incorporate the NLF into a new government as "mortal danger." (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 7 GUAM)

110. Telegram From the Commander, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (Westmoreland) to the Commander in Chief, Pacific (Sharp)¹

Saigon, March 18, 1967, 0403Z.

MACV 09101. Subj: Force Requirements (U). Ref: CINCPAC msg DTG 100445Z (U).²

1. (TS) Introduction

A. The purpose of this message is to provide an analysis of current MACV force requirements projected through FY 68. Last year, when we first developed out force requirements for CY 67, we stated a requirement for 124 maneuver battalions with the necessary combat and combat service support for a total strength of 555,741. As it developed, we did not reclama the 470,366 Program Four package because of adverse piaster impact and the realities of service capabilities. Subsequent reassessment of the situation has indicated clearly that the Program Four force, although enabling us to gain the initiative, will not permit sustained operations of the scope and intensity required to avoid an unreasonably protracted war.

B. Against the foregoing backdrop we have taken a new look at our requirements. We find, as was estimated in connection with development of CY 67 requirements, that the enemy has increased his structure appreciably. We are confronted for example with large forces in and above the DMZ and in the Laotian and Cambodian sanctuaries, plus major enemy groupings within SVN. Our new appraisal has established an immediate requirement for an additional 2-1/3 divisions, which in terms of personnel spaces, can be accommodated by restructuring the original 555,741 force package. In my view, this additional force is required as soon as possible, but not later than 1 July 1968. This, in effect, constitutes a six month extension of our CY 67 program, and would permit shifting of force programming from a calendar year to a fiscal year basis. This shift has long been needed to make force programming for Vietnam compatible with other programs and to provide essential lead time in the procurement of hardware.

C. Looking ahead, it is entirely possible that additional forces, over and above the immediate requirement for 2-1/3 divisions, will mate-

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXIX, Cables. Top Secret. Received at the Pentagon at 0928Z on March 19. Repeated to the Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet, the Commander in Chief of the Pacific Air Force, the Commander in Chief of the U.S. Army, Pacific, the Commanding General of the Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

² Not found.

rialize. Present planning, which will undergo continued refinement, suggests an additional 2-1/3 divisions equivalents whose availability is seen as extending beyond FY 68.

D. Development of force requirements cannot of course be confined to an assessment in terms of US force alone. An improved RVNAF, whose growing commitment to the support of revolutionary development is psychologically, politically and militarily vital is fundamental to success of the overall program for Vietnam. A force ceiling on RVNAF is now in effect, however, [if its mission is] to be fulfilled in cadence with an expanded US effort, a selective increase in RVNAF capabilities is required as well. Among added rewards of such action is creation of a suitable base for establishing a GVN constabulary.

E. With respect to the relationship of free world forces to recomputation of requirements, it is the position of this headquarters that provision of any and all such forces to meet increased demands is welcomed as additive reinforcements. A ROK infantry division stands forth as particularly desirable in this regard.

F. The paragraphs that follow contain an analysis of the projected situation, together with a presentation of additive force requirements deemed necessary in the interests of suitable balance and generation of the strength necessary to accelerate fulfillment of the MACV mission.

2. (S) Intelligence: The enemy has altered neither his objectives nor his intention of continuing the protracted war of attrition. He continues to augment his forces by infiltration and in-country recruitment/conscription. He has introduced long-range, large calibre rockets. His basic force structure of nine divisions and supporting troops in RVN continues to pose a serious threat. Although enemy combat strength and effectiveness have decreased somewhat during the past few months, his force structure is not expected to be reduced. In fact, it is within the enemy's capability to increase this force structure by 1968 to 12 division framework. This would require increased infiltration to offset losses and to compensate for diminishing in-country conscription.

3. (TS) Concept and force requirements FY 68.

A. Concept

(1) During 1966, our operations were primarily holding actions characterized by border surveillance, reconnaissance to locate enemy forces, and spoiling attacks to disrupt the enemy offensive. As a result of our buildup and successes, we were able to plan and initiate a general offensive. We now have gained the tactical initiative, and are conducting continuous small and occasional large-scale offensive operations to decimate the enemy forces; to destroy enemy base areas and

disrupt his infrastructure; to interdict his land and water LOC's and to convince him, through the vigor of our offensive and accompanying psychological operations, that he faces inevitable defeat.

(2) Military success alone will not achieve the US objectives in Vietnam. Political, economic, and psychological victory is equally important, and support of revolutionary development program is mandatory. The basic precept for the role of the military in support of revolutionary development is to provide a secure environment for the population so that the civil aspects of RD can progress.

B. Force requirements FY 68

(1) The MACV objectives for 1967 were based on the assumption that the CY 67 force requirements would be approved and provided expeditiously within the capabilities of the services. However, with the implementation of Program Four, it was recognized that our accomplishments might fall short of our objectives. With the additional forces cited above, we would have had the capability to extend offensive operations into an exploitation phase designed to take advantage of our successes.

(2) With requisite forces, we shall be able to complete more quickly the destruction or neutralization of the enemy main forces and bases and, by continued presence, deny to him those areas in RVN long considered safe havens. As the enemy main forces are destroyed or broken up, increasingly greater efforts can be devoted to rooting out and destroying the VC guerrilla and Communist infrastructure. Moreover, increased assistance can be provided the RVNAF in support of its effort to provide the required level of security for the expanding areas undergoing revolutionary development.

(3) Optimum force. The optimum force required to implement the concept of operations and to exploit success is considered 4-2/3 divisions of the equivalent: 10 tactical fighter squadrons with one additional base; and the full mobile riverine force. The order of magnitude estimate is 201,250 spaces in addition to the 1967 ceiling of 470,366 for a total of 671,616.³

[Here follows discussion of the tactical strategy necessitating force requirements in each CTZ, the minimum essential force requirements, the minimum manpower requirements by type of unit, logistics for the new increment of troops, and the financial impact of the accretion.]

³ This figure was adjusted to 678,248 on March 28.

111. Telephone Conversation Between President Johnson and Secretary of State Rusk¹

Washington, March 18, 1967, 10:43 a.m.

Rusk: We have a telegram in from Saigon.² The South Vietnamese would like to put in their reply to U Thant before Guam so it would not look as though it was sort of dictated to them at Guam. Their reply accepts U Thant's proposal in principle, but then it makes two suggestions. One, that a military truce ought to be worked out by the military commanders, perhaps meeting in the demilitarized zone between North and South, and secondly, that they suggest that we just go on to an international conference among the interested governments. They don't reject the idea of preliminary talks, but they say, "Why don't we just have a conference?" Now this is consistent with the various things that we have said but there is some point in their going ahead and putting in their reply before Guam. On our own reply, there's nothing in it that we have not said many times before, and if Arthur Goldberg were to make clear to the Secretary-General that we've made many diplomatic approaches to Hanoi without success and they fail to agree to discussions, and we should not suppose that we're going to take further pre-conditions which Hanoi might seek here, and that we are not prepared to accept the Secretary-General's proposal and then negotiate down from them, I think there is some advantage in getting these things off. There is nothing in our reply that we haven't said publicly on a number of occasions. So I would think we ought to go ahead and make it quite clear to the Secretary-General that he mustn't try to negotiate us down without anything from Hanoi in his hands.

President: Well, I just have this thought. I proceed from one negotiation to the other constantly waiting for something that never comes and usually find myself in worse shape at the end of the proposal than I do at the beginning. I think that the time, after all these attempts, fifteen or twenty that we have agreed to, time ought to come sometime when one of these proposers, these guys that like to get into these acts all the time, would at least be told that "you bring us something and you'll find a pleasant and favorable response, but you don't take anything from us until you get something from them." I just think we ought to, because if we don't I'm very fearful that you'll be in here

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and Rusk, March 18, 1967, 5:30 p.m., Tape F67.09, Side A, PNO 2. No classification marking. This transcript was prepared in the Office of the Historian specifically for this volume. The President left that evening for the meeting in Guam.

² Not further identified.

next week and say, "Now Mr. President, I just don't think we ought to be doing this this week on account of so and so." Now, we constantly do that, three years of it, and we're on borrowed time now and just a few months before the judgment day, and I don't think that U Thant is our friend. I don't think he'll do much for us except embarrass us. I think the whole outfit up there is potentially a very embarrassing thing. So I just want to meet them as frankly as I can to begin with and say, "Now, you go and show us what you can deliver, and your problem will not be with us. We'll be reasonable." But I do not want to be saying that we are willing to do so and so and so and so until we know what they're willing to do. Now, heretofore we've been doing this. But that hasn't produced anything, and I wish we could just one time say to them, "Tell us what you'll do." That's my feeling.

I'm afraid that you and Bob will be in next week saying, "Well, now, we agreed to do this; we told him to go ahead and we would do so and so," and I'm terribly afraid of these negotiations at this stage because I don't think they want them and I don't think they're ready for them and I don't think they're prepared to give a damned thing. And if they were prepared, I'd be more frightened than I am because I don't think they're prepared to give what we must have. And I think the time, we have a limited time to go ahead and get ourselves in condition and I don't want anybody interfering with it—with the Ronnings, or with the British Prime Minister, or with Kosygin or any of these folks—if we can. I'm prepared to pay the price with public sentiment going against me if U Thant does this. But I know this: that when U Thant makes a proposal or Bobby Kennedy makes one or somebody else one, although we are ready to do our part, it just costs us five or ten points [in the public opinion polls] next week. We get their hopes up, and then the people say, "Oh, good God, here it is," and then they're nailed again each time we strike out. It's just like Mickey Mantle coming to bat and we strike out, and I don't want to give them enough hope I think if it's going to be a strike out and I think it's going to cost me another five or ten points and a lot of criticism.

And so, I'd like to put him off until the atmosphere is a little better; until there's some chance. I think that with this Constitution, if it comes through out there and if we can get an election in 90 days and have that work out well, I think that we're going to be in a lot better condition than we are now. And I don't want to just say, "No, we will not," but I think we could say, "We are ready and willing if you can show us anything from them" period. Now what we'll do depends on what they ask, but if they bring us another Pope's letter,³ why, you

³ See Document 42.

know what the answer's going to be. Now, is he in a position to get a much better thing than the Pope? If he did, I'd be frightened because I might have to say no.

Rusk: No, I think our problem here is, or stems from, the fact that U Thant is not helpful to us and that he would parley this thing into an appeal over our heads to public opinion here and abroad unless we put something in that would just cut across that. Now, the substance of what is in our proposed reply is simply something that we've said many times before.

President: We had different conditions before, though, Dean. We had 80 percent before and we're down to under 40 percent [in the public opinion polls] now, and we're getting weaker all the time, and we've said before we'd have pauses and we've had three of them. But the situation is a lot different now and we just finished the last big negotiation with Wilson and Kosygin, and I think we came out of it worse than we went into it. And we just played with the mothers of this country indicating there's some chance and this then there's just one little eyelash and it would have been "a peace in the world" according to Wilson, and I think that's gullible.

Rusk: Well, I think that with the press yesterday, when they asked me about all this business, all the rumors all point to one question: "Where is Hanoi and what are they doing?" Unless you got an answer to that question, you haven't got any peace yet.

President: That's right, that's right. That's what I want to tell U Thant and Goldberg because they're not up to any good purpose. They just think it's a problem with the hawks of Johnson and Rusk and the Generals and so on and so forth.

Rusk: You would have no problem about South Vietnam going into the conference?

President: Well, I want to give them any leadership that you think you can consistent with my feeling. I just don't want you to get grabbed by the nape of the neck and hauled in to some kind of a meeting and go repeat Korea all over. And I think that you're playing in an explosive mine field and I don't trust these people that are leading us into it. I don't think their motives are pro-Johnson.

Rusk: Is there any special point you want to emphasize with the governors this afternoon?⁴

Johnson: Yes, I want that chart. I want to take that, and I want to—take the attitude I'm taking now—I want you to take the position—and

⁴ Reference is to the meeting of the White House Conference of Governors on Federal-State Relations held on March 18 from 9 a.m. through 4 p.m., followed by an evening dinner. (Johnson Library, President's Daily Dairy)

I got it from you; usually I just repeat what you said a week before, but I want you to point out that they don't hang up, they'll answer you on the phone, and you've said it and you've said it and you've said it, and time comes if when you get out and you make your public pleas and you get on your knees and you walk, there comes a time when a proud country just thinks that they think they ought to keep their man standing and waving against those things, and until they show some seriousness, you see no reason why we ought to jump in and say "peace, peace, peace." Now, we want peace more than anybody, but the best way to get peace is to be just be a little bit firm and have a little dignity and support those men out there. You do that very well, but I would really go awfully strong on it and I would show your charts, go over them and say, "Now, here's seventeen nations and we did it in one day; we met our Security Council and our President; we said 'yes, sir' and they said 'no, no, no.' Now, they've said 'no' to seventeen of them, and here's the last thing they've said, this is the Pope, now I want you to read these and I want all of you to remember, governors, its four things they told us: we had to get the hell out of there; we had to stop our bombing; we had to turn it over to the Viet Cong Communists. Now, we just can't do those things, and that's the last thing they said." Now all this private stuff, we don't have to depend on Weinstein⁵ or Bill Baggs or any traveling people. We can talk directly to this man. This is his attitude, and he confirmed it to us and he confirmed it to the Pope. Now, on the Goldberg thing, it's your judgment that I want to follow, but I sure want you to know in making your decision I want you to know my instincts.

Rusk: All right. Fine. Thank you, sir.

⁵ Rabbi Jacob Weinstein, President, Central Conference of American Rabbis.

112. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, March 18, 1967, 2:15 p.m.

Mr. President:

Herewith Secretary Rusk's redraft of a message to U Thant after your telephone conversation with him. I have gone over it with General Taylor.

Our preferred position would be that we not now make a substantive reply to the Secretary General because we have not in fact thought through the problems of a general cessation of hostilities and because some of the language in this message could rise up to haunt us; for example, "standstill truce."

On the other hand, Secretary Rusk's argument for a prompt response is quite strong; and Saigon will, apparently, be filing its response in any case.²

At the minimum, General Taylor and I have indicated in pencil the changes we would make in this draft.

Our minimum changes reflect two substantive problems:

1. "Any place" could mean Hanoi or some other point of embarrassment. We ran into this problem in the Korean truce talks.
2. "Standstill truce" has overtones of freezing the sovereignty and limiting the police powers of Saigon which "cessation of hostilities" avoids. We are clear that any serious negotiation of a cessation of hostilities might involve, as part of a process, the reservation of certain areas for VC forces which would not be attacked; but that is a quite different thing from giving them the chance to define territorial control, which might be the basis for later political claims via a "standstill truce." In fact, the heart of a truce or cessation of hostilities negotiation is a political negotiation about the place of the VC in South Vietnamese society under the constitution. We should leave flexibility for

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Intelligence File, U Thant Proposal 3/14/67. Secret.

² The GVN issued its own reply to Thant's aide-mémoire. It called for a meeting between ARVN and Viet Cong leaders in order to arrange the mechanics of the cease-fire and for the opening of "a Geneva-type international conference" rather than simply allowing for the beginning of preliminary talks. (Telegram 20715 from Saigon, March 18; *ibid.*) Lodge was strongly opposed to the "so-called stand-still." (Telegram 20591 from Saigon, March 16; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S)

that process and, in our judgment, not get frozen into the possibly dangerous “standstill” language of the Secretary General.

To give you an idea of the issues that are in fact involved, if we move towards a cessation of hostilities, I attach a memorandum done by General Taylor after conversations yesterday.³ Whether or not we go forward with an answer to the Secretary General, I hope we shall budget some time during the Guam trip for talk about this matter.

Walt

Attachment

U.S. Aide-Mémoire to Secretary-General of the United Nations Thant⁴

As the Secretary General knows, the United States and other Governments have, over many months, approached Hanoi, both publicly and privately, with proposals to end the conflict in Vietnam. To date, all such efforts have been rebuffed. The Government of North Vietnam has refused to agree to discussions without pre-conditions or to take reciprocal actions leading toward a cessation of hostilities.

For this reason, the Government of the United States would be most interested in learning whether Hanoi is willing to enter into such discussions or to take reciprocal actions leading to peace in Vietnam. The United States has been, and remains willing to enter into discussions without pre-conditions with Hanoi at any time.⁵

To this end, the United States accepts the three-step proposal in the aide-mémoire of the Secretary General of March 1967 envisaging: (a) A general stand-still truce; (b) preliminary talks; (c) reconvening of the Geneva Conference.

The United States believes it would be desirable and contributory to serious negotiations if an effective cessation of hostilities⁶ as the

³ Not printed. In his March 18 memorandum to the President, Taylor proposed as a possible response to U Thant's initiative a simultaneous discussion of military and political issues in the DMZ under ICC auspices; he recommended that the proposal be considered at the upcoming conference in Guam.

⁴ The revised aide-mémoire was sent to Thant that day. Goldberg strongly recommended immediately making the reply public. He feared that the Indians, the Canadians, the Poles, the Japanese, or the United Nations itself would pre-emptively release the record of the exchanges anyway. A prompt and public reply would buttress relations with Thant and allow an affirmation to be issued at Guam. (Telegram 4445 from USUN, March 17; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 7 GUAM)

⁵ The words “or any place” were deleted from the end of this sentence by Rostow.

⁶ Rostow wrote “cessation of hostilities” to replace “standstill truce.”

first element in the three-point proposal, could be promptly negotiated.⁷

It would, therefore, be essential that the details of such a general cessation of hostilities⁸ be discussed directly by both sides, or through the Secretary-General, the Geneva Conference Co-Chairmen or otherwise as may be agreed. The United States is prepared to enter into such discussions immediately and constructively.

The United States is also prepared to take the next steps in any of the forms suggested by the Secretary General to enter into preliminary talks leading to agreement as to the modalities for reconvening of the Geneva Conference.

Of course, the Government of South Vietnam will have to be appropriately involved throughout this entire process. The interests and views of our allies would also have to be taken fully into account.

⁷ The word "established" before "promptly" has been marked out by Rostow, and he added "negotiated" at the end of this sentence.

⁸ Rostow again substituted "cessation of hostilities" for "standstill truce."

113. Telephone Conversation Between President Johnson and Vice President Humphrey¹

Washington, March 18, 1967, 5:30 p.m.

President: Good speech you made.²

Vice President: Oh, thank you.

President: I think that you've got to cut out a little special niche for yourself. If I were you in these briefings, which we'll be talking to, the editors, mayors, and the rest of them, I'd get myself a little fresh approach like you did today and just say, "Now here are many things I'd like to add to what the President said to the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, agriculture, and economics. I'm interested in every one of those subjects. But, you've heard that, and I agree with what's been said."

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and Humphrey, March 18, 1967, 5:30 p.m., Tape F67.09, Side B, PNO 1 and 2. No classification marking. This transcript was prepared in the Office of the Historian specifically for this volume.

² Reference is to Humphrey's remarks at the meeting of the White House Conference of Governors on Federal-State Relations, which was held on March 18.

Vice President: Yeah.

President: "I've made three trips to Asia this year, the most since I've been President, and this is a pretty large bloc of people. This is where two-thirds of the world live, and a hungry two-thirds of them." Then I'd take the Rusk line on the Huks in the Philippines, then I'd move into Malaysia, then I'd move into the sixth largest nation in the world, Indonesia.

Vice President: Yeah.

President: Then I'd go into China, the largest one in the world with 700 million. I'd just say, "Now, if you think we got troubles because we've lost 5,000 men, think about the 500,000 men Indonesia's lost and she's lost her Communist system, and we've rescued it. Here's what they've lost in Malaya, and she's lost it and we've rescued that. Here's the Philippines; we've rescued that. And we're going to rescue South Vietnam and the Chinese are in a blood-bath with each other. Now, why are we raising so much hell and crying when we have saved the world from Communism." I just think that little approach tying it on like you did this afternoon, that's what they don't hear, they never see, they can't draw themselves, and why we don't want to claim that we brought about the Indonesia thing, if we hadn't given them the money we did, if we haven't supported the generals the way we did, if we hadn't been in South Vietnam the way we were, there wouldn't be any Sukarno demise.

Vice President: Yes.

President: Well, while you may not want to go quite that far, you can certainly say that the ones that are closest to it realize the danger, and we have saved Malaysia, and Indonesia, and the Philippines, and China is in a blood-bath and the North Vietnamese are running. Why in the hell we ought to be hollering "pause" or attacking our own men, you don't know. Now it's time to stand up and support our own men. Just get you a little patriotic one-minute ending there and I think you could really wrap it up pretty good.

Vice President: Well, I thank you, Mr. President. That's what I'd like to do. I hesitate a little bit to inject myself in on these meetings.

President: I would always wind it up as kind of like the ranking fellow and let me introduce you there at the end and get you a time limitation. We all talk too long, everyone of us. We ought to quit at four. The reason I didn't want you to talk at 1:15 was that I was afraid they'd raise hell about us talking too long.

Vice President: Right.

President: And I'd already busted in and talked too long on highways, but I, oh boy, you'd get knocked out because they would have made a platform all afternoon.

Vice President: That's right.

President: On top of that, they had an agreement they were going to give us hell.

[Here follows discussion of legislation on Latin America, the space treaty, and NATO issues in the context of the security relationship with West European allies.]

President: It looks like we have prevented a dismantling of NATO and we're in good shape. Now, I think there ought to be two or three things that you ought to do. The first thing I think you ought to do is get you a little chart and have the Defense Department make it in red, white, blue, and green, and colors like they make their charts, that would show, on a page 8 by 10 where you have a number of copies of it, all of the various pauses we've had and the reaction. Right under the first pause, the first Bobby Kennedy pause—he came April 22 and urged it. In May, we put it on. We told them a week ahead of time, and the first day they pitched it back at us. We ought to show that. And then the second pause, we ought to show what that is—37 days. They assured us it would be 12 to 20 days, not 15 to 20, it was 12 to 20. The Soviets put it on; they initiated with Mansfield, then with Fulbright, then with Morse, then with Clark, then with Bobby Kennedy, then with Mac Bundy, then with McNamara, then they all sold Rusk. I turned it down two or three times then finally went on with it. Had it go 37 days. And the last pause, 6 days. We told them way ahead of time when Tet was coming up, and we said to them directly, "Listen, now if you'll give us any indication whatever, we will reciprocate anything you give us." But they said "No, no, no, hell no" every time. Now I think you ought to say that to every one of these leaders and you ought to give them this chart.

Vice President: Yes, sir.

President: Before you give them the next chart and say: "Here's what the seventeen nations did. Here's what the Indians did. Here's what the British did."

Vice President: Yes sir. Just like we had there today, only I get those in small size.

President: In an 8 by 10 and leave it with them. And I might just take me one about half as big as this, about the size of my chart over there on inflation, in red, white, and blue, take one on pauses, and take one on peace initiatives, instead of putting them all on one. And get you one about a yard—about half as big as Rusk's; about the size of McNamara's—in color. You might take that on the plane so if you speak to any universities, you could show it to them, and say, "Now why is this such a one-sided affair? Why does my President have to say to the seventeen nations, yes, yes, yes, and then wait a week, then get denounced, and then have them say no? Why does he have to say to the

British Prime Minister and Kosygin yes and have them say no? Why does he have to say this yes and them no? Now why in the hell don't you get Hanoi one time to say yes to anything and then come to us. Why do you always attack us and never attack them? They're the ones destructing." I'd just fight the hell out of Hanoi, prosecute the living hell out of them, and prosecute anyone else that won't make them. If they're interested in peace, by God, let them deliver their client.

Vice President: Uh-hmm.

President: I think it's a pretty good line to just say in your Democratic speeches, that you said the other night when Bobby gave his pause that some of you think that the administration's against it. But we're not at all. And since he's such a big [inaudible] man, we wish that by God he'd stop his bombing for 37 days and give us a pause for a little bit.

[Here follows continued discussion of Humphrey's European trip.]

President: Anyway, I'd just try to get me a damn good staff and really, really have a good, personal, dignified trip, but to try to really get some good publicity out of it that will make you look very substantive and working on these things and going at the President's request, and I wouldn't apologize for one Goddamn thing. I'd just take the offensive on everything.

Vice President: Yes, sir. That's what I want to do.

President: I'd just say our position is that we don't want to change NATO at all. That we'd like to stay right where we are, that we think every nation ought to do what it's agreed to do, and we're going to do it. But it's pretty hard when the rest of them haven't come up for us to keep from rotating one division, and our President doesn't believe we ought to change it at all. We don't think we ought to have an invitation for these sons-of-bitches to march. He doesn't forget what Khrushchev told Kennedy at Vienna.

Vice President: No, sir.

President: And we don't want to be encouraging them. But they do encourage them when they jump on us out in Vietnam and all that kind of stuff. And the weaker we are the weaker NATO is and they ought to have sense enough to know it. And if they think we're a bunch of country bumpkins, why, they're just a bunch of Goddamn fools, and they better quit attacking us. I'd get in. I'd tell Wilson to get every Goddamn back-bencher he's got—he's got the wildest and the radical.

Vice President: Yes, sir.

President: I just talked to him about the Goddamned bombing. They got in there last night and they bombed a bunch of our people there and killed them. But nobody says anything about their bombing. They'd stopped their bombing for awhile. Quit bombing the airport in

Saigon. Quit bombing the Embassy in Saigon. Quit bombing our bases everyday with these Russian rockets. Goddamn it, if they quit bombing, we quit bombing.

Vice President: Well, I think I'll be able to do a bit of work on them.

President: I'd just take the back-benchers, just say you're not going to yield to any liberalism, not a Goddamned one of them, that you had this same fight when you were killing Fascists in Germany.

Vice President: Yes, sir.

President: Europe, when you had to go over there when the Battle of Britain was on, that you had the ship status with your state and the United States Senate, were raising hell then, and you've got them now. But the time's come when you've got to stand up to people who are trying to provoke tyranny and enslave folks and do it by aggression. You did it in Greece and Turkey, you did it in Berlin, you did it wherever it rears its ugly head. Just because it's not in their backyard there's no reason to think that by God they ought to let it go off in their brother-in-law's yard.

Vice President: Yes, sir. Very good.

[Here follows further discussion of Humphrey's itinerary.]

114. Editorial Note

As the U.S. military effort in Vietnam expanded, the South Vietnamese Government (GVN) incurred substantial foreign exchange holdings. With growing criticism of the benefit reaped by the GVN at U.S. expense, the long-standing issue of foreign exchange moved slowly toward resolution during 1967. The U.S. Government's position was to commit the GVN to the agreement of November 4, 1966, which limited the GVN's foreign exchange reserves to \$250 million, but the GVN did not want such a drastic draw-down of its then rising reserves. It also objected to the transfer of commodities from the Commercial Import Program (CIP) to a direct import program, a measure designed to force down GVN balances but under which South Vietnam would lose the subsidies provided through the CIP. South Vietnam only wanted to be bound to a consideration of prepayment of its loans from the United States as the sole reduction mechanism. For the evolution of this issue, see U.S. House of Representatives, Armed Services Committee, *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967, Study Prepared by the Department of Defense*, Book 7, pages 27–29, 33, 36–38, 44–47.

Extensive negotiations were carried out between Ambassadors Henry Cabot Lodge (and his successor, Ellsworth Bunker), Robert Komer (later attached to the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam), and Deputy Director of AID Rutherford Poats for the United States, and Prime Minister Nguyen Cao Ky and Bank of Vietnam Governor Nguyen Huu Hanh for the GVN. On March 19, 1967, Lodge and Ky signed an interim agreement on foreign exchange rate unification. See *The Pentagon Papers*, Senator Gravel Edition, Volume II, pages 395–396. On March 28 the State Department's classified periodical *Current Economic Developments* reported on the agreement:

"Vietnamese exchange reserves have risen over \$200 million in the past year and a half—to a level of nearly \$350 million at the end of February. To deal with this, arrangements have been made for: A) Prepayment in piasters of \$40 million of outstanding US loans to the GVN. B) Establishment by the GVN of a \$50 million development fund deposited in the US, tied to US procurement, and usable for economic development projects approved jointly by the USG and the GVN. C) Sale of 300,000 tons (worth approximately \$50 million) of PL-480 rice for piasters, which the US can use for local expenses instead of these piaster proceeds going mostly for GVN troop pay as is the normal arrangement. This rice generates piasters from GVN importers at the rate of 118 per US dollar. This will reduce DOD purchases of piasters (at the less advantageous official rate of 80 piasters per dollar) by about \$75 million, so this arrangement is highly advantageous to the US balance of payments." (*Current Economic Developments*, Issue No. 776, March 28, 1967, page 6; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, E/CBA/REP Files: Lot 72 A 6248, *Current Economic Developments*)

On August 29 notes were exchanged to establish a P.L. 480 agreement for the sale of a minimum of 500,000 tons of rice by the United States on a 100 percent uses basis of piaster proceeds (a situation that gave an advantageous rate of exchange to the U.S. Government) with 100,000 tons delivered in 1967 and 400,000 tons by mid-1968. However, the uses provision would reduce to 20 percent when the GVN applied to piaster purchases of the U.S. Government and American firms the exchange rate of 118 piasters per dollar (the previous rate had been 80 piasters per dollar). In order to maintain the past level of foreign exchange, the package included an additional \$240 million in financing for agreed-upon and future economic development programs, \$227 million of U.S. financing of CIP commodities, and funds for other non-P.L. 480 commodities. Also, the United States would establish a capital development fund for South Vietnam that would be held to finance GVN imports under the November 4, 1966, agreement. In turn, the GVN would hold to the reserves ceiling while making a 100 billion piaster contribution to the Free World forces and prepaying one of its major loans to the United States. On October 31 the Board of Directors of the National Bank enacted the rate regulation, but in November

added a commission payment to reduce the exchange rate to 117.6 piasters per dollar. Documentation on these negotiations is *ibid.*, Central Files 1967–69, E 1 VIET S, FN 10 VIET S, and AID (US) 15 VIET S.

115. Memorandum for the Record¹

Agana, Guam, March 20, 1967, 3–5:30 p.m.

SUBJECT

Working Notes on First Day's Session of Guam Conference

PARTICIPANTS

See attached lists²

The President opened the session by welcoming the Vietnamese delegation and noted that one of the main objectives of the conference was to provide him with the opportunity to introduce to the Vietnamese representatives the new American team which would soon be taking over in Vietnam. He then introduced Ambassador Bunker, Ambassador Locke, and Mr. Robert Komer. During the course of these introductory remarks, the President expressed high praise for Ambassador Lodge and the work he had done in Vietnam. The President then stressed the importance of the constitutional process now in train in Vietnam and the drafting work of the Constituent Assembly. He also underlined the importance of the task of preparing for and holding elections which would give SVN a truly democratic government with a popular base. This stress on the constitutional and electoral process of nation-building set the tone and theme for the entire session.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 7 GUAM. Top Secret; Sensitive. Drafted by Carver, who transcribed these working notes of the meeting on March 23. Only three copies were made; one was sent to Rostow, another to the State Department Executive Secretariat, and the last kept by Carver and the DCI. (Memorandum from Carver to Rostow, March 23; *ibid.*) The President and his principal advisers left Washington late on the evening of March 19. Their flight landed at Agana Naval Air Station, Guam, at 10:44 a.m. on March 20 (local time), and the President greeted the arriving Vietnamese dignitaries at 11 a.m. (Johnson Library, President's Daily Diary) The meeting was held in the Conference Room of the COMNAV/Marianas Headquarters Building.

² According to an attached list of attendees, not printed, among the American participants were the President, Rostow, Rusk, McNamara, Wheeler, Lodge, Bunker, Westmoreland, Harriman, Sharp, Komer, McNaughton, and Taylor. The Vietnamese side included Thieu, Ky, Cao Van Vien, Tran Van Do, Hanh, and Bui Diem.

General Thieu (Chairman of the National Leadership Council and South Vietnam's present Chief of State) opened the Vietnamese presentation. He thanked President Johnson warmly for the latter's initial remarks and his support for the cause of Vietnamese independence. General Thieu added that the trend of the war was now running in our favor. The enemy, frustrated in the military field, was shifting his emphasis to the political front. Gen. Thieu felt that in the military area stronger pressure ought to be put on North Vietnam in order to persuade the Hanoi regime to cease its aggression in South Vietnam. Gen. Thieu then turned to the substantial results and progress that had been achieved in Vietnam since the Honolulu conference, noting that his remarks would be general and that Prime Minister Ky would provide amplifying details. He called attention to the Constituent Assembly elections held in September 1966 and to the work of that assembly as tangible proof of the kind of progress that had been made. He said the drafting of the constitution had been completed and the constitution would be promulgated within a few weeks. He noted that elections for village and hamlet councils would be held next month (i.e., April), promised that SVN would have a popularly elected government by the fall of 1967, and that "by the end of this year" would be well on the road to constitutional democracy. Gen. Thieu then asked his prime minister, Air Vice Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky, to make a detailed report on the present situation and progress in South Vietnam.

General Ky also expressed his personal pleasure and that of his government at the opportunity to confer with the President of the United States and the President's advisers on the situation in Vietnam. The full text of Ky's remarks is separately available and hence those remarks will not be recapitulated in detail here. Ky spoke of national reconciliation, of Revolutionary Development and constitutional progress, proudly waving a copy of the final draft of the new constitution handed him a few hours before he boarded the plane for Guam. He said that document was "now as good as the law of the land." The theme and principal thrust of Ky's presentation is summarized in his statement, "We are going to do everything possible to make our nation whole again. We are striving to provide an atmosphere in which all our citizens can have respect for himself, his fellow citizen, and his government and its institutions." Taken in context, his comments about the Front (no coalition) and the need to keep pressure on Hanoi contained nothing a potential Vietnamese presidential candidate would not have had to say. They did not—as the press inaccurately reported—strike a jarring note out of harmony with American views. Ky concluded by paying tribute to the American soldier and by welcoming Ambassador Bunker, Ambassador Locke, and Mr. Komer to Vietnam.

The President thanked Chairman Thieu and Prime Minister Ky for their fine presentation of the situation in Vietnam and the progress be-

ing made there. He welcomed the Vietnamese achievements both in the military field and, particularly, in the field of nation-building. He stressed strongly the US Government's desire to see the pacification effort intensified. The President also stressed the need for close military and civilian coordination—both US and Vietnamese—in this all-important pacification effort.

General Cao Van Vien (GVN Minister of National Defense) then gave a briefing on the military situation in South Vietnam. He noted that the Communists were under increased pressure and were suffering battlefield defeats. The Viet Cong, he observed, were trying desperately to regain stature by local initiatives such as the attack made on 15 February in Quang Ngai Province. The Viet Cong were also steadily increasing their use of rockets, mortars, and recoilless rifles in an effort to inflict psychologically impressive damage on Vietnamese and allied forces. General Vien observed that over the ensuing weeks and months the Viet Cong (VC) will probably adopt a three-fold strategy involving:

- (1) Increased attacks on Vietnamese and allied base camps and installations in order to increase GVN and allied commitments of troops to static defense duties.

- (2) Increased attacks on Revolutionary Development teams because the Communists feel it essential to thwart these teams' effectiveness.

- (3) Increased attacks on district and provincial headquarters in order to terrorize local Vietnamese leaders, generate political pressure, and thwart South Vietnamese political development.

General Vien then presented a detailed view of current Republic of Vietnam and Free World armed forces' actions.

Following this, General Vien discussed the Vietnamese Army's wholehearted commitment to the support of the Revolutionary Development (RD) program, emphasizing that the GVN's military leaders completely understood this essential task. General Vien observed that the increasing level of attacks on RD teams proved that the RD effort was hurting the Communist cause and driving the VC to desperate measures.

General Vien stated that the primary mission of the Vietnamese and allied armed forces was threefold:

- (1) To defeat the enemy's military force
- (2) To surge ahead in Revolutionary Development
- (3) To halt infiltration and the movement of men and supplies from North Vietnam to South Vietnam.

General Vien concluded his remarks with some specific comments on the infiltration problem, observing that the Communists could never be defeated so long as they were able to bring a continuing flow of supplies and manpower into the South. He noted that South Vietnam

had a 935-mile border with Cambodia and Laos, a border that was ill-defined and impossible to make secure against infiltration. In order to stop this infiltration, the GVN had a specific proposal they wished to offer for American consideration, namely, that of placing forces along the alignment of Route 9 from the Vietnamese border to the Mekong River. The GVN was not proposing a Maginot Line, but, instead, a series of interlocking strong points created by an aggressive deployment of ground troops. The GVN recognized the political difficulties involved in this proposal and the problem it would create in regard to the 1962 Geneva agreement in Laos. Nevertheless, the GVN felt that it was a practical plan and noted that the Communists' use of Laotian territory itself constituted a complete violation of the 1962 agreements, and hence, an act of naked aggression which the Communists' opponents were perfectly justified in countering.³

The President thanked General Vien for his review of the military situation and asked General Westmoreland if the latter had any additional comments to make.⁴

General Westmoreland added that the Communist enemy unquestionably had increasing problems. There was no evidence that the enemy's strategy was changing but his tactics were modified from time to time. His losses had doubled during the course of the preceding year. The enemy now had 54 maneuver battalions but only half of these were fully combat effective. Vietnamese and allied progress was obvious and was supported by much tangible evidence. For example, 18 percent more of SVN's road net was now open to daily traffic. Out of the entire ARVN, US advisers rate only seven battalions as not being fully combat effective at this time, and General Westmoreland was assured that this number would be reduced to zero in the near future. There was a steady and noticeable improvement in South Vietnamese combat leadership and performance. General Westmoreland also observed that there was a steady improvement in the pacification situation, particularly in the area immediately around Saigon. There was, in short, much to be encouraged about. What was most needed now was still better positive work on our side coupled with even more pressure on the enemy.

The President took up the theme of national reconciliation and the Vietnamese Government's program in this all-important sphere. He ex-

³ Subsequent press comment indicated that General Vien was talking in terms of a five-division force, but my notes make no reference to specific numbers of troops and to the best of my recollection no mention of numbers was actually made in this context at the 20 March Joint Session. [Footnote in the source text.]

⁴ Both my notes and my memory indicate that the Vietnamese Route 9 proposal was not mentioned or discussed by any American speaker at the 20 March Joint Session. [Footnote in the source text.]

pressed his gratification at the fact that our Vietnamese allies manifestly felt the same urgency on this matter as did we.

The President congratulated Chairman Thieu and Prime Minister Ky on Vietnam's constitution and its successful completion.⁵ He expressed his personal appreciation at the sense of urgency obviously felt by Chairman Thieu and Prime Minister Ky with regard to constitutional development.

The President also welcomed the account of South Vietnam's progress toward elections. There followed an exchange of comments during which Ky again promised to move forward on elections with all possible speed, saying that he hoped the presidential and senatorial elections could be held by mid-August. The President noted that his birthday was on August 27 and said he could ask for no finer birthday present than an elected president and senate in Vietnam.

The President, again referring by name to the members of his new team, assured the Vietnamese delegation that the best men available in our country would be sent to help the Vietnamese people in their task of building a free nation. He also assured the Vietnamese that General Westmoreland would be given whatever he needed, wanted, and could use in the task of defeating the Communist enemy. The very best men who wore the uniform of the United States would be sent to Vietnam to help the Vietnamese defend their freedom.

The President noted how fine it was to watch a democracy being built and how anxious the United States was to assist in this exciting task. The President stressed the need for stability, complimenting the present Vietnamese leaders on the amount of stability they had brought to Vietnam during their period of trusteeship. He observed jovially that "you seem to be doing a better job of maintaining unity than I am," and used this well-received jest as a means for underlining the paramount importance of the Vietnamese military establishment's remaining unified.

The President then again praised the work of Ambassador Lodge in helping the Vietnamese along their road to political democracy. He commented that he was going to ask Ambassador Lodge to become his ambassador-at-large so that the Ambassador could explain to the American people the fine things the Vietnamese were doing and so that his counsel would continue to be available.

The President then turned to the subject of long-term planning, noting that since victory was on the way despite present difficulties, it

⁵ The National Assembly approved the draft Constitution on March 18, as did the National Leadership Committee (the Directorate) on March 19. The GVN Constitution was promulgated officially on April 1. For text, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1967*, pp. 897–909.

was urgently important to begin now to make plans for the future. He invited Dr. Lilienthal to speak on what was being done in the post-war planning field.⁶

Dr. Lilienthal stressed the importance of the task. He briefly reviewed the ideas and plans he has blocked out in concert with his Vietnamese colleagues, particularly his counterpart Dr. Vu Quoc Thuc (the GVN's Director of Post-War Planning).

Vu Quoc Thuc replied to Dr. Lilienthal's remarks on behalf of the Vietnamese delegation. He praised Dr. Lilienthal highly and, on behalf of the Vietnamese people and government, thanked the President for making Dr. Lilienthal's assistance available. He noted that he and Dr. Lilienthal had very similar views, which made working together a pleasure. Dr. Thuc explained it was difficult to do post-war planning when one did not know for sure whether to plan in terms of an isolated South Vietnam sealed off from the North or in terms of at least a limited amount of trade and commerce with South Vietnam's northern neighbor. He assured the President that the Vietnamese were working hard to develop responsible programs capable of meeting the needs of the post-war future.

The President then took up the subject of inflation and the critical need for land reform.

Mr. Komer called attention to the economic agreements recently concluded with the GVN, which would help in the anti-inflation field.

Mr. Hanh (Governor of the National Bank and recently named Minister of Economy and Finance) replied to Mr. Komer's remarks and assured the President of the GVN's continued cooperation in the all-important field.⁷

Prime Minister Ky assured the President that the GVN was well aware of the importance of land reform and of pressing further in this area as rapidly as possible. He noted that there were a number of complicated administrative problems, including the fact that Vietnamese law required detailed surveys before titles could be issued and in many areas security considerations precluded making the kind of survey the law requires. He said he had decided to cut through the red tape in

⁶ Lilienthal headed a group charged to initiate planning for the development of the Mekong Delta region in the postwar years.

⁷ Mr. Hanh happens to be an old friend of mine. We talked for a few moments just after the Joint Session broke up. During our conversation Mr. Hanh said there were still some technical problems on the topics he had been discussing in Saigon with Mr. Komer but he had not wanted to raise them at the 20 March session. [Footnote in the source text.]

this sphere and accept certification by hamlet and village councils that peasants owned given plots of land.

Chairman Thieu closed the session by reassuring the President and his colleagues, including General Westmoreland, that the Vietnamese would concentrate on both the military and the civilian side of the conflict and had every confidence in making continued progress. In these closing remarks, Chairman Thieu referred once more to the Route 9 proposal.

[Here follows a final note by Carver cautioning that these notes were solely for his own and the DCI's use and were never intended to reconstruct the meeting.]

George A. Carver, Jr.⁸
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

⁸ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

116. Memorandum for the Record¹

Agana, Guam, March 21, 1967, 10:30 a.m.–2:15 p.m.

SUBJECT

Working Notes on US Delegation Session of Guam Conference

PARTICIPANTS

US Delegation only. All US officials attending the joint session were there, plus some others whose names I did not record.

The President opened the meeting by giving a brief résumé of the 20 March joint session. "Yesterday," he observed, we had heard the Vietnamese report on their efforts and progress. "Today," we would take stock of our own efforts. The President then asked General Westmoreland to give a report on the US military effort.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 7 GUAM. Top Secret; Sensitive. Drafted by Carver. The meeting was held in the Conference Room of the COMNAV/Marianas Headquarters Building. The President and his entourage left Guam at 5:40 p.m. (Johnson Library, President's Daily Diary) For text of the Joint Communiqué issued by President Johnson and the South Vietnamese leaders on March 21, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1967*, pp. 891–892.

General Westmoreland opened by noting that 70 percent of South Vietnam was covered by jungle or by marshland. Eighty percent of the South Vietnamese people lived on 40 percent of the country's territory, and 40 percent of the country's territory was virtually unpopulated. All of this meant the guerrilla enemy had many places to hide and was able to operate in a terrain environment advantageous to him.

General Westmoreland also noted that the eastern part of Laos, particularly the eastern part of the so-called "panhandle," was de facto North Vietnamese territory through which Hanoi could move troops and supplies at will. By land through Laos and across the so-called demilitarized zone, which was no longer demilitarized, and by sea along the coast, Hanoi was infiltrating men into the South at a rate of about 7,000 a month.²

The Vietnamese-Cambodian border, undefended and ill-defined in many places, provided the Communists with other advantages, including ready availability of secure sanctuary from which they could sally forth to harass GVN forces. Hanoi, despite the Communists' mounting problems, is still confident of victory, still confident that the Communists can wear down the Free World's will to continue the fight.

General Westmoreland then sketched the Communists' over-all command structure, noting that operational control of Communist military activity in South Vietnam's two northernmost provinces (Quang Tri and Thua Thien) was exercised directly from North Vietnam's Military Region IV headquarters in Vinh, North Vietnam.³

General Westmoreland reviewed the many problems facing Free World forces including that of operational security. He noted that the enemy has infiltrated South Vietnamese ranks on both the military and civilian side to such an extent that it is difficult to keep the Communists unaware of any operational planning or information passed to our Vietnamese allies.

General Westmoreland stressed that the enemy's target was not terrain but people, and that he had the bulk of his forces concentrated in South Vietnam's populated areas.

General Westmoreland then reviewed the enemy's order of battle and present troop deposition, and the deposition of allied forces made to counter various Communist threats. He noted that the enemy

² In a March 22 memorandum to the President, Rostow criticized Westmoreland's use of this figure as too conservative, as it ignored a downward trend in infiltration statistics since the first quarter of 1966. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXVIII)

³ General Westmoreland actually said Military Region III, but this was a slip of the tongue. [Footnote in the source text.]

presently had an eleven division force and estimated that the Communists were striving to achieve a twelve division force structure.⁴

In his review of Communist troop depositions, General Westmoreland noted that the Communists had seventy-seven base areas in South Vietnam, three in Cambodia, and seven in Laos. The Laotian bases are marginally accessible by ground operations and could be struck by air. The Cambodian bases are not accessible because of political considerations. Several times during his presentation, General Westmoreland directed attention to the fact that two Communist divisions are presently located in Cambodia in secure sanctuary from which they could sally forth and from where they pose a constant threat against which we have to deploy.

General Westmoreland explained the importance of these base areas in Communist strategy and the success Free World forces have had in base clearing operations. He also pointed out the complexity and difficulty of such operations, noting Communist mastery of camouflage and concealment practices, and the extensive use the Communists made of well-hidden tunnel complexes. By way of illustration, he noted that in Operation Junction City (which is presently in train) we have run across what was obviously the headquarters of a major COSVN propaganda unit located in a tunnel. This particular tunnel complex included rooms at least half the size of that in which the Guam conference was being held. In one such room, US forces had recently discovered a complete underground broadcasting station.

General Westmoreland then made a corps by corps review of the current situation. He stated we were making progress in the Mekong delta. There are 91 districts in the delta (i.e., in IV Corps); we were making progress in 45, standing still in 42, and losing ground in four (one district in Kien Hoa Province, one in Vinh Binh and two in Sa Dec). There were three South Vietnamese Army divisions in the delta, two of which (the 21st and the 7th) were very good and—by Vietnamese standards—well led.

The III Corps region is the heartland of South Vietnam and is consequently the area where General Westmoreland had placed the greatest concentration of US troops. There were serious problems in III Corps, an area in which the enemy had also concentrated great efforts. The three South Vietnamese divisions located in that corps were the poorest in the South Vietnamese Army. To bolster Vietnamese efforts,

⁴ General Wheeler (with whom I rode back from Guam) and I both feel that the eleven division figure was another unintentional slip of the tongue. Both MACV and the Washington intelligence community presently credit the Communists with nine headquarters complexes in or near South Vietnam capable of controlling division-sized operations. [Footnote in the source text.]

General Westmoreland was deploying US troops in Gia Dinh and Long An provinces to protect Saigon and to improve security in the immediate vicinity of the capital. General Westmoreland said he was also placing US troops (elements of the 9th Division) in Dinh Tuong Province, where their initial efforts had been both good and effective.⁵

To meet the Communist threat, new tactics were constantly being devised. For example, General Westmoreland planned to use a "floating brigade" in the Communist stronghold of War Zone C. This brigade would be supplied by parachutes and helicopters, and would keep constantly on the move to harass the Communists and deny them the use of this key base area.

General Westmoreland then reviewed II Corps and his problems in keeping an adequate screen to protect against incursions by the Communist forces presently located in Cambodia.

General Westmoreland used Quang Ngai Province as a concrete illustration of the problems in I Corps. He cited an example of the damage caused by four Communist regiments located in that area, and explained how it could take a full allied division operation in that area for a year to clean it out.

After his detailed review of the situation, General Westmoreland summarized the over-all picture, noting progress and achievement but making the point that unless military pressure causes the Viet Cong to crumble and Hanoi to stop its support of southern insurgency, the war in Vietnam could go on indefinitely.

The President asked General Westmoreland whether he thought the Communists accurately reported their own defeats and losses and hence whether Hanoi had a true picture of the situation in South Vietnam.

General Westmoreland replied that in their reports up the chain of command, the Communists greatly exaggerated their successes and the casualties they inflicted on allied forces.⁶

Returning to the subject of infiltration, General Westmoreland called attention again to the importance of Communist movement through Laos and suggested the outlines of a plan that would involve recruiting and training tribal elements native to that area (Khas) as forces that could operate in the area and interdict Communist infiltrators.

⁵ Dinh Tuong is actually in IV Corps, but General Westmoreland discussed it in the context of his III Corps operations intended to protect the southern approaches to Saigon. [Footnote in the source text.]

⁶ My notes are sketchy here but I believe the point General Westmoreland was making was that the Communists report their own losses with reasonable accuracy but greatly inflate their claims of damage inflicted on allied forces, thus presenting a distorted view of the situation. [Footnote in the source text.]

The President then initiated a brief discussion of bombing pauses and asked General Westmoreland's opinion about their consequences. General Westmoreland wholeheartedly supported the political wisdom of the pauses ordered to date, but explained the advantage the Communists took of any suspension in the allied aerial interdiction campaign. After some gentle, skillful questioning by the President, General Westmoreland did admit that he hoped these pauses would not become a habit.

The President thanked General Westmoreland for his fine survey and asked Admiral Sharp to give a report on the aerial campaign against North Vietnam.

Admiral Sharp made a brief summary review during which he noted his belief that our bombing campaign had been successful in light of its limited objectives. It had not stopped infiltration, but no one had ever thought it would. It had made Communist infiltration immensely more difficult and costly for the Communists and also exerted a constant pressure on the North Vietnamese regime.

Admiral Sharp then asked two of his aides (Marine Corps Brigadier General Hutchinson and a Navy commander whose name I did not catch) to present detailed briefings on CINCPAC operational proposals with respect to aerial bombardment and mining operations.

General Hutchinson outlined an extension of the Rolling Thunder operation involving six target systems in North Vietnam:

- (1) transportation
- (2) military complexes
- (3) petroleum storage and distribution facilities
- (4) war supporting industries
- (5) electrical power
- (6) port complexes at Haiphong, Hon Gay, and Cam Pha

(Because of the sensitivity of the subject matter I specifically *did not* take detailed notes on the projected targets. [The JCS can almost certainly provide copies of the briefing folders handed the President, Secretary McNamara, and Secretary Rusk.]⁷ I do recall that the total proposal was presented in the context of an April–October 1967 time frame, involved seven target packages, and a total of 59 targets. It was estimated that the execution of this program would entail 1,715 civilian casualties in the DRV and the loss of 82 US aircraft.)

General Hutchinson then outlined the MIG threat in North Vietnam, the general problems caused by North Vietnamese air defense capabilities and a proposal to cope with these threats. (Again, because of

⁷ Brackets in the source text.

the sensitivity of the subject and its lack of relevance to CIA programs, I specifically did not take detailed notes.)

The Navy Commander then reviewed mining operations which have already been executed and offered a plan for mining the harbors of Haiphong, Hon Gay and Cam Pha. (Once more, I specifically avoided taking detailed notes on this sensitive topic which involved matters outside of CIA's concern.)

The President then turned to Ambassador Lodge for a report on civil activities in Vietnam, particularly in the field of nation-building and pacification.

Ambassador Lodge observed that because of the lateness of the hour he would discuss only the topic of elections and then ask two of his colleagues (Mr. MacDonald and General Humphreys) for short briefings on the important topics of land reform and civilian casualties.

Ambassador Lodge briefly reviewed the four elections coming up in the near future: the village and hamlet councils to be elected in early May, the presidential election tentatively scheduled for 3 September, the upper legislative house (Senate) election scheduled for 4 September, and the lower legislative house (Assembly) scheduled for one month after that.

The President noted that this was not the same schedule that Prime Minister Ky had presented the previous day.

Ambassador Lodge acknowledged this and pointed out that Ky may have been over-optimistic. The schedule just outlined (according to US Embassy's best information) was the one presently being planned. Ambassador Lodge emphasized the importance of this electoral process and the course of constitutional development presently in train. He explained the role and influence of Vietnam's military establishment in present South Vietnamese politics and estimated that if the military could agree on a single candidate, most likely Ky or Thieu, that candidate would probably win. He gave a frank assessment of both Ky and Thieu, and concluded by expressing his belief that the US Government could live and work with either one and should not interfere in the contest now discreetly being waged for the support of the military establishment. Ambassador Lodge pointed out that the constitution drafting process could never have gone so smoothly or been completed so quickly had Ky and Thieu not both genuinely supported the process. Ky's ability to wave the "coonskin constitution" at Guam was real triumph for Vietnam's present leadership and a profoundly significant indicator of progress.

The President asked if there were no civilians capable of being serious contenders for the presidency in Vietnam.

Ambassador Lodge explained that the course of recent Vietnamese history had produced a breed of politicians trained in the techniques

of plot and conspiracy but ill-suited by background or experience to provide positive political leadership. Ambassador Lodge noted that Tran Van Huong and Pham Khac Suu were probably the two leading civilian figures, but explained that neither was likely to win a national election, and that neither would make a particularly good president, especially Suu.

General Taylor endorsed Ambassador Lodge's assessment of Suu. (Someone—I am not sure who, but I think Secretary Rusk—asked whether the Constituent Assembly had brought forth any new leadership.)

Ambassador Lodge replied that it had produced some potentially promising figures but no one presently capable of winning the office of president.

Secretary Rusk (I think) asked about Dr. Phan Quang Dan.

Ambassador Lodge replied that Dan had a certain measure of political skill and some following, and had performed quite credibly in recent months, but was not really presidential timber.

Ambassador Lodge then summarized the course of the electoral and constitutional process, stressed its importance, and the significance of the progress the GVN was making in this vital area. He then asked Mr. MacDonald to give a brief summary of current activity in the field of land reform.

Secretary Rusk interrupted to call everyone's attention to the great sensitivity of the just-completed discussion about possible Vietnamese presidential candidates and the names that had been brought up. The Secretary underlined the importance of protecting the secrecy of the fact that such a discussion was held by the American delegation. Mr. MacDonald (USAID Director) then gave a short résumé of current progress and problems in the field of land reform.⁸

The President expressed his belief in the great importance of this issue, noting the universal appeal of land ownership and the deep emotions it arouses. The President asked if more use could not be made of photographs obtained from aerial reconnaissance, photographs which could be given to individual farmers with the borders of their land outlined on the picture. The President cited examples from his own experience in the early days of the New Deal which showed the impact such photographs could have.

⁸ A major problem was that under the new Constitution, an expensive and potentially crippling restitution program for expropriated land would be borne by the GVN in order to satisfy its major political base, the propertied classes. (Memorandum from Aldrich to Harriman, March 16; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, EA/VN Files: Lot 71 D 31, E-12 Land Reform, January–June 1967)

Mr. Komer noted that the technical resources for providing such a photographic service existed and volunteered General Momyer's assets. (General Momyer smiled but did not comment.)

General Humphreys (USAID Medical Director) made a short presentation on the topic of civilian casualties, outlining what was being done to minimize the hardship of war on the civilian population but noting the difficulty in acquiring valid statistics. He called attention to the fact that—despite press comment and resulting public impressions to the contrary—much of the suffering in Vietnam, including burns, was not war-caused or necessarily war-related.

After this final presentation, the President made a few concluding remarks pulling the conference together and laying renewed stress on the central importance of making progress in the political nation-building sphere as well as in the military struggle.⁹

[Here follows Carver's postscript disclaimer that this record was based on "sketchy notes" and was incomplete.]

George A. Carver, Jr.¹⁰
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

⁹ According to notes by Charles Flowerree of EA/VN, the President's concluding remarks involved a discussion with Westmoreland over logistical support for and the morale of the troops in the field. (Memorandum from Flowerree to Unger, March 21; *ibid.*, EA/VN Files: Lot 75 D 167, T.S. Trips, Meetings, Visits: President Johnson and Vietnamese and East Asian leaders in Manila, Guam—1966, 1967)

¹⁰ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

117. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in the Soviet Union¹

Washington, March 24, 1967, 6:02 p.m.

162643. State 143101.² In Bundy/Dobrynin conversation on evening March 23, following discussion reported Exdis septel con-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER. Top Secret; Priority; Nodis; Sunflower Plus. Drafted and approved by Bundy.

² Telegram 143101 to Moscow, February 24, summarized a conversation between Rusk and Dobrynin on February 23. During the talk, Dobrynin implied that the U.S. Government was interested solely in a military resolution of the Vietnam conflict since it had refused to halt the bombing during the Marigold exercise the previous December and since it did not accept a Hanoi-proposed 7-day truce during the Tet holiday. Rusk disagreed and pointed out that the "real problem" was that if the other side stepped up its military activities, then "it was inevitable" that the U.S. Government would do so. Without specific guarantees, a bombing halt could not be enacted. (*Ibid.*)

cerning Hanoi motives in revealing President/Ho letters and anticipated Hanoi negative reply on U Thant proposal, discussion turned to lengthy review of Moscow exchanges and brief references to December dealings through Poles. Following were highlights:

1. Dobrynin stuck throughout to same basic line as in reftel, that Hanoi simply would not talk unless we stop the bombing. He repeated argumentation that Hanoi could not possibly accept our insistence on reciprocal action without accepting whole US view of nature of conflict. Bundy responded that Soviets well knew practical reasons why we could not stop bombing and allow Hanoi to pour in additional divisions and equipment.

2. Conversation then got onto U Thant proposal, as to which Dobrynin had already indicated that Hanoi response would be negative.³ Bundy remarked that we had supposed Hanoi would find difficulty in working out any major cessation of hostilities, although we ourselves had done our best to make constructive response to SYG.

3. Bundy then said that Hanoi revelation of letters continued to puzzle us very much, as we had formed clear impression that if Hanoi ever wished to move seriously it would do so in some secret and private manner. Hence we were genuinely distressed that Hanoi had damaged, if not destroyed, privacy of Moscow channel.⁴ Dobrynin did not respond directly, and did not take possible occasion to indicate any hope Moscow channel could be resumed. (Neither he nor Bundy referred to subsequent NVN refusal to accept contact with Thompson.)

4. Bundy then went on to argue, along lines Secretary had followed in reftel, that if positions were difficult to reconcile on stopping the bombing, and if cessation of hostilities presented similar difficul-

³ The Department suspended contacts with the DRV Embassy in Moscow while the U Thant initiative unfolded. (Telegram 157597 to Moscow, March 17; *ibid.*) When Akalovsky talked to Hoang Man'Tu on March 21, Hoang Man'Tu told him: "At present, U.S. carrying out every day new steps of grave escalation of aggressive war against people of NVN. At same time, U.S. is mounting a game of contacts with DRV reps in order to deceive world public opinion and to cover its criminal acts of war. In view of this, DRV Ambassador in Moscow cannot receive U.S. Ambassador." (Telegram 4020 from Moscow, March 21; *ibid.*)

⁴ On March 21 the North Vietnamese published the February exchange of letters between President Johnson and Ho Chi Minh; see Documents 32 and 82. INR Intelligence Note 231, March 22, concluded that Hanoi released the notes due to the perceived intensification brought about by the Guam conference, pressure from Peking, and a desire to shore up its own morale. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXVIII) In a March 22 memorandum to the President, Roche suggested the following explanation: "I suspect Ho (a complete realist) is in favor of negotiations, found himself confronted by a powerful opposition in the Party, endorsed the opposition's view in order to consolidate his organizational strength, will now move (using the old salami tactic) to neutralize his enemies within the Party, and may write you another letter." (*Ibid.*, Name File, Roche Memos)

ties, perhaps best way to proceed would be to go back to our message of January 20 in Moscow, offering to talk on full range of topics related to final settlement and in effect to see “where we would come out.” Bundy noted that Hanoi had never responded to our January 20 message, and that this had been one of major negative factors, together with lack of any response to President’s letter, that had led us to go ahead with resumption on February 13. He stressed that discussion of January 20 topics need not be described as “talks” but could simply be exploratory “non-conversations.” If we were able to arrive at a clear picture of an agreed final settlement, question of more formal talks and even of stopping the bombing might take on different hue. Dobrynin obviously understood the point, but did not respond in any hopeful way.

5. Bundy then remarked that if Hanoi were so insistent that we stop the bombing before any talks could take place, it was hard to suppose that there could have been any substance to what the Poles told us in December about a willingness to meet in Warsaw. Dobrynin shrugged this off with the perhaps revealing remark that Poles had given Soviets an entirely different picture than the one we had presented of who had taken the initiative for the Warsaw contacts and by implication the statement of US position. The inescapable implication was that Poles had represented to Soviets that USG had initiated Lewandowski channel and that USG had either drafted or endorsed Lewandowski formulation and urged that it be presented to Hanoi. Bundy merely said Soviets knew facts as we clearly understood them. In this exchange, Dobrynin returned to theme that our bombing on December 2 and 4 had thrown Rapacki off, and that bombing of December 13–14 had caused clear Hanoi rejection of Warsaw meeting. Bundy did not attempt to go back over this familiar ground.

6. In commenting on our February 13 resumption, Dobrynin did complain that we had not given additional time for Hanoi response. Bundy responded that Hanoi had given no response whatever to our whole series of proposals, and Dobrynin did not really press the argument, although he did say that our resumption had given impression in Moscow that USG or some elements in it, were impatient and anxious to press forward with military pressures.

7. Dobrynin expressed hope that there would not be “dramatic developments” in USG actions against NVN. Bundy responded that there would undoubtedly be continuing developments, although he did not know whether they could be called “dramatic.” Dobrynin specifically inquired on significance of Guam meeting. Bundy responded that President had wished to meet with SVN leaders and to introduce new team, and to have customary periodic review of all elements in situation. No major decisions had been anticipated or taken.

Dobrynin's inquiries on these matters did not appear to have special note of urgency or alarm.

8. Conversation also included brief exchange on situation in China. Bundy noted that there now appeared to be at least temporary settling down in cultural revolution, perhaps related to need to concentrate on planting season. Dobrynin expressed strong agreement that latter was key factor, and stated judgment that resumption of struggle highly likely in view of deep-seated views held by Mao personally.

9. *Comment.* General Dobrynin mood seemed little if any changed from that evidenced in his February 23 conversation with Secretary (reftel). He seemed almost resigned to present state of affairs and present Hanoi position. His recriminations and his references to our military actions were along familiar lines and moderate in tone. While holding out no hope that Hanoi might in fact pick up our January 20 avenue, his prediction of resumed struggle in China might conceivably suggest Moscow is lying low in case Chinese developments should give them another chance to exert influence.

Rusk

118. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, March 25, 1967, 1137Z.

21308. 1. Prime Minister Ky spoke to me very frankly March 25 about the choice of a military candidate for President. Nothing he said could be taken to mean that the decision between Thieu and himself has already been made. However, his remarks suggested that he may be thinking seriously about stepping aside in favor of Thieu.

2. He began by saying that the armed forces will not choose a candidate. "The situation is very simple," he said, "if Thieu decides to run, I will support him. He is senior and it is up to him to have the first chance at it. If he decides not to run, then I will run."

3. I asked him what Thieu was thinking, and he said Thieu was "undecided." I asked how much time there was in which to make up his mind, and he said, "Not more than two weeks."

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXVIII. Secret; Exdis. Received at 8:33 a.m. Rostow wrote on the cable: "Herewith the latest on Ky's election plans in relation to Thieu" and sent it to the President, who was at Camp David March 25–27. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary)

4. I congratulated Ky on his attitude, which I thought was both correct and intelligent. It would be a disaster if there was to be a conflict between him and Thieu, and it was a fine thing for him to take such a broad minded attitude. He was young; He could wait. In any case, there are many other things which he could do besides being President.

Lodge

119. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Komer) to President Johnson¹

Washington, March 25, 1967.

SUBJECT

Guam and Aftermath

I decided to go right down to Saigon after Guam, to show that the new team was in action, to work out an optimum relationship with Westy, and to deal with other pressing business. It was my seventh trip in less than a year. I believe that the following matters are worth reporting to you; by now I have sufficiently intimate ties with all senior US and most senior GVN personalities that they are eager to confide in me.

I. *The Real Impact of Guam.* Leaving aside the press problem, Guam once again helped significantly to move forward the war. As at Honolulu and Manila,² bidding the GVN to the conference table forced them to put best foot forward. Thus Guam, for example, expedited GVN "ratification of the Constitution." Far few people realize the impact such conferences have along these lines.

As for the GVN/US reports to you at Guam, I don't care how many press wizards call me a rosy optimist, but I believe that Ky/Thieu's air of confidence more accurately reflects the real pace of events than Westy's more prudent views.

I had long talks with key GVN Ministers Thang, Vien, and Hanh at Guam.³ We moved several items forward, especially on pacification.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Robert Komer, White House Chronological, 1 January–1 May 1967. Secret.

² Conferences held in February and October 1966.

³ Nguyen Duc Thang, Minister for Revolutionary Development; Cao Van Vien, Minister of National Security, and Nguyen Huu Hanh, Minister of Economy and Finance.

I played up economic facts and figures for the press as you requested, and even got a page 1 story in Tuesday's *NY Times*.⁴

II. *Making Pacification Move*. To lose no time in getting the show on the road, I devoted top priority to working out my relationship with Westy. I am pleased to report that I think we have reached a good, workable meeting of minds. Westy and I can—and will—work together. He says he will use me as a manager to supervise all civil/military aspects of pacification—not just as an adviser.

I have already discussed the proposed arrangements briefly with Ellsworth Bunker, who concurs. He also expects me to work closely with him, which I will gladly do. Walt and I will clear the new scheme with Rusk and McNamara in the form of a NSAM and submit it to you soonest for final decision. I believe that we should act promptly to forestall further press speculation.

III. *Personnel for the Bunker Team*. Ellsworth deserves the strongest team we can field. Rostow says you've promised Ellsworth anyone he wants, and I'll now produce the names:

A. A replacement for Roy Wehrle⁵ on the economic side is the most critical need. Gaud, Lodge, Porter, in fact everyone most strongly proposes my own economic deputy *Chuck Cooper*; he's brilliant, highly knowledgeable, action-oriented, an ideal choice. Bunker concurs subject to meeting him. I've twisted his arm, and he'll come *provided* he can bring his wife *and* infant. Since infants stay with their mothers full-time, this would *not* violate the no-children principle. There is *no* substitute for Cooper, except one guy at Yale who has five kids he won't leave.

B. Bunker and I believe *Lansdale should stay* at least through the election, despite the fact that Lodge advises getting rid of him. Not least, the press would have a field day if Lansdale quit.

C. *Zorthian* should stay on a few months for a smooth transition, but I'm coming around to Len Marks' view that he's a mixed blessing. Ellsworth and I have a top-notch eventual successor in mind.

D. *Abrams will be a great addition*. However, Westy seems clearly nervous that Abrams is being sent out as his eventual replacement. Unless this is really the case, a little reassuring LBJ message for Westy would be helpful.

Sorting out my role vis-à-vis Abrams as Westy's two deputies will be a problem, but Westy and I think it a manageable one. Westy wants me to supervise pacification—military as well as civilian—while Abrams focusses primarily on revamping the Vietnamese forces. This

⁴ See *The New York Times*, March 21, 1967.

⁵ Economic officer at the Embassy in Saigon.

makes good sense. Lodge says that you told him Abrams would “run the military side of pacification,” but McNamara and Rostow say he is rather to be a general deputy. I hope the latter is indeed the case, because the whole rationale for putting me under Westy to run pacification is to unify civil/military management for better results.⁶ And if I don’t know more about how to get pacification rolling than anyone else on the new team, I’ll eat that Stetson you owe me.

I have much else to report, but will hold off in order to get the above to you pronto. As I hope McNamara and Rostow told you at Guam, I will cheerfully do my best to help bring home the bacon in any capacity you want. But my ability to produce—and you know I can—will inevitably depend on my being cast in a role where I can operate most effectively. If you approve the new arrangements, I will take off in two weeks—as the first of the new team to show up on the job.⁷

R. W. Komer⁸

⁶ Komer and Westmoreland met in Saigon during late March to work out organizational guidelines for CORDS. Komer would report directly to the MACV Commander and be in sole charge of pacification under the “single manager” concept. General Creighton W. Abrams would have the task of invigorating the ARVN. Their agreement is contained in Komer’s memorandum to McNamara, March 29; Washington National Records Center, RG 330, McNamara Vietnam Files: FRC 77-0075, Vietnam (March and April 1967). Komer discussed the issues involved in the shifting of pacification responsibility in a March 27 memorandum to the President, to which was attached a draft NSAM. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Robert Komer, Memos to the President, January–May 1967) This draft NSAM later became NSAM No. 362, May 9, Document 167.

⁷ In telegram 20988 from Saigon, March 22, Lodge laid out a scenario for the change-over of Embassy staff. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXVIII) In telegram 21226 from Saigon, March 25, Lodge wrote: “MACV’s success (which means the success of the United States and all of us) will, therefore, willy-nilly, be judged not so much on the brilliant performance of the U.S. troops as on its success in getting ARVN, RF and PF quickly to function as a first-class counter-terror, counter-guerrilla force.” (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 27 VIET S)

⁸ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

120. Telegram From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson at Camp David¹

Washington, March 27, 1967, 2120Z.

CAP 67207. For the President from Walt Rostow. This is how Thieu and Ky got the Constitution through the Directorate on the last round. The dates are now set, as you can see. And the last line is worth a lot.²

On Sunday evening,³ I became anxious because of reports that the Directorate was very dissatisfied with the Constitution. Accordingly, I decided to see General Thieu on Monday (today). As I have previously reported, I had a talk with General Ky about it on Saturday.

Today, a number of tentative appointments which I had with Thieu did not materialize because the Directorate was in continuous session. Finally, I got in to see him at 4:45 p.m. and told him of my anxiety because of the reports which I had heard that the Generals were against the Constitution.

Thieu said that they had indeed been against the Constitution, and that when they recessed for lunch, he had thought that they might not accept it. But he said lunch, plus "some music and some drink" plus a great deal of very hard reasoning by Thieu and Ky finally brought them around. They had approved the Constitution, and also approved the date of September 1 for election of the President and the Senate and the date of October 1 for the election for the members of the lower house. Promulgation is to be on Saturday, April 1.

Thieu said that today's session was extremely strenuous. The Generals had been willing to accept everything in the Constitution that pertained to the future, but they disapproved of the so-called "transitional period," making the Constituent Assembly the legislative body pending the election of the permanent legislature. They made the point that the Constituent Assembly had not been elected for that purpose, and that it was in effect a fraud on the voter.

They stressed that they were taking Thieu's and Ky's word that the national and international considerations were such as to justify overlooking that defect.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXVIII, Cables. Secret; Exdis. The President was at Camp David March 25–27; he left there at 5:30 p.m. on March 27 and returned to the White House at 6:10 p.m. (Ibid., President's Daily Dairy)

² Following is the text of telegram 21516 from Saigon, March 27.

³ March 26.

Thieu told me that he said to them that no constitution was perfect, but there would be opportunities in the future to correct the defects in this Constitution.

As I left, he said, "Tell President Johnson not to worry." Lodge.

121. Action Memorandum From the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (Unger) to the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Kohler)¹

Washington, March 27, 1967.

SUBJECT

Strong Point-Obstacle System in Viet-Nam

Discussion

1. On March 13 General Starbird and his associates briefed you on a strong point-obstacle system designed to inhibit infiltration into the northern portion of South Viet-Nam.² The unclassified code name

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Top Secret. A notation by Kohler, dated March 28, reads: "Discussed with S, who considers entire project approved in principle at top level and agrees to going ahead with implementation of first requirement."

² The feasibility study of an anti-infiltration barrier across northern South Vietnam and southern Laos was begun under orders of McNamara on September 15, 1966. The Defense Communications Planning Group, headed by General Alfred Starbird, was in charge of planning and implementing the air, ground, and electronically supported anti-infiltration barrier. In its eastern part within South Vietnam, initially known as Practice Nine and later termed Illinois City, the barrier entailed a static system of bases between areas of ground obstacles. The section of the "barrier" that extended into Laos would include small teams used for reconnaissance and interdiction in operations known as Prairie Fire. Air operations in support of the line were termed Muscle Shoals and the troop-supported components of the barrier came under the code-name Dye Marker. The initial development of the barrier would occur in northeastern Quang Tri Province between the DMZ and Route 9. (Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960–1968*, Part III, pp. 45-16–45-28) On January 12, 1967, the President placed Practice Nine program in the category of highest national priority. (Memorandum from Rostow to the President, January 12; Johnson Library, National Security File, NSAMs, NSAM 358) A "MACV Practice Nine Requirements Plan" submitted by Westmoreland to Sharp, January 26, initially was disapproved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. (Department of Defense, Official Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 911/321 (9 Jan 67), IR 1160, Sec. 2) However, in a February 22 memorandum to McNamara, Wheeler stated his disagreement with the decision of the other service chiefs and recommended that the plan be implemented.

of this project is Practice Nine. As you will recall, the initial phase calls for construction of a series of strong points just south of the DMZ extending inland a distance of approximately 30 KM. Secretary McNamara has given the go-ahead for the preliminary work on this portion of the system. Plans for a westward extension using air-dropped mines and sensors are still in a preliminary stage.

2. On March 9 CINCPAC/MACV was given authority to proceed with improvements to the port of Hue which will be receiving most of the Project Nine material and to Route One north of Hue. The next step will be to acquire the necessary right of way for the strong point system and to make arrangements for relocating civilians who will be displaced by the construction work or who will find themselves in the no-man's land between the line of strong points and the Demarcation Line between North and South Viet-Nam. MACV estimates that between 13,000 and 18,000 civilians will have to be relocated.

3. We have queried Saigon about GVN receptivity to this project and about the political, sociological and economic problems which it might create (Tab D).³ Saigon responded to the effect that the Mission saw no major difficulties, provided Washington was convinced that the cost of the project in manpower and matériel was justified (Tab C).⁴

4. DOD has now proposed that we send a Joint State/Defense message to Saigon asking the Embassy to approach the GVN to secure its support in the acquisition of land and the relocation of civilians (Tab A).⁵

5. While we believe the initial 30 KM section of the system will be of limited military value as an anti-infiltration measure (it might have somewhat more utility as an impediment to an overt invasion) we can perceive no political problems associated with it which would justify our interposing an objection. However, it is important to bear in mind that to be fully effective against infiltration the system will

(Ibid.) As a result, in a March 6 memorandum to the JCS, Secretary of Defense McNamara, upon the positive recommendation of Wheeler and despite protests from the four service chiefs and Sharp that the diversion of forces and funding for the scheme could not be arranged in the time called for, directed that preparations for the execution of the strong-point obstacle system go forward and that the system be in place by November 1. (Ibid.)

³ None of the tabs is printed. Tab D is telegram 156207 to Saigon, March 16. It informed the Embassy in Saigon that the Department would send it a joint State-Defense message requesting procurement of GVN support for the project.

⁴ Tab C is telegram 20625 from Saigon, March 17, in which Lodge suggested that the GVN approved of the plan and would likely bring it up at the Guam conference.

⁵ Tab A is a draft of telegram 164440 to Saigon which was sent on March 29. It was a joint State-Defense message directing the Embassy to approach the GVN in regard to Practice Nine. A copy of this telegram as it was transmitted is in the National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S.

have to be extended across the remainder of South Viet-Nam and into Laos. The more successful the initial section is the more the enemy will be forced to move his infiltration operations westward thus generating pressures for further extension. Approval of phase one of this system thus at least bears the implication of approval of the entire concept. In principle we would have no objection to the use of air-dropped sensors and mines in agreed areas of Laos so long as we continue the policy of conducting air operations against North Viet-Nam. But we would have to reserve judgment on the use of ground elements to back up the system. (We note that the use of a small number of ground forces is a feature of the preliminary plan for the Laos extension.)

6. Two other proposals which are connected with but not essential to the execution of Practice Nine are: (1) the use also of third country troops to man the strong point system in order to give it an international flavor and (2) the reconstruction of Route Nine, presumably all the way to the Mekong. Both of these proposals require further consideration. An immediate decision is not required. In the meantime EA will explore these problems further with Embassies Saigon & Vientiane.⁶

Recommendations:

1. That you approve the attached Joint State/Defense message to Saigon relating to the acquisition of land and resettlement of population (Tab A).

⁶ A joint State/DOD message, telegram 194042 to Bangkok and Vientiane, May 13, requested the Ambassadors in Laos and Thailand to secure the permission of their host governments for the implementation of logistical measures for the barrier. (Ibid.) There were also other problems that needed to be factored into consideration of the plan. In telegram 24607 from Saigon, May 3, the Embassy warned that if a proposal for mutual withdrawal was implemented, "the enormous cost of these installations would be wasted, and we would presumably have to destroy them, at further cost." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 2 D Barrier) In a June 1 memorandum, McNaughton recommended to McNamara that the Defense Department oppose a 10-mile line of mutual withdrawal, inside of which the barrier would be, since Practice Nine could not be implemented under those conditions. (Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OSD Files: FRC 72 A 2467, Viet Barrier 385 (Jan.–July 1967)) Also, in a memorandum dated May 22, Leonard Sullivan of the Office of Defense Research and Engineering argued that weather posed significant problems that had not been addressed. "The problems related to poor visibility, impossible surface trafficability, and potential isolation of these outposts during a very large percentage of the year are surpassed only by those caused by the level of enemy activity in the area." The obstacle system could not be established "without large troop commitments." (Department of Defense, Official Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 911/410 (22 May 67), IR 1436)

2. That you sign a letter to Assistant Secretary McNaughton noting that approval of Phase One of this plan does not constitute approval of the details of subsequent phases of Project Nine (Tab B).⁷

⁷ Tab B is a March 27 letter from Kohler to McNaughton, which informed him that the State Department approved the first phase of the project. As indicated in footnote 1 above, the measure was approved. In memorandum JCSM-204-67 to McNamara, April 17, the Joint Chiefs recommended that full implementation of the barrier concept be delayed until April 1, 1968, but requested that funds be allocated as soon as possible in order to initiate the line's construction and other operational requirements. (Department of Defense, Official Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 911/321 (Jan 67) IR 1160, Sec. 6) In a memorandum to the JCS on April 22, McNamara approved the implementation of measures designed to support the plan. He continued to hold to the November 1 deadline for completion. (Ibid.)

122. Telephone Conversation Between President Johnson and Secretary of State Rusk¹

Washington, March 28, 1967, 4:14 p.m.

President: [Robert Kennedy] is doing it all over Europe, and so on and so forth. So he brought it up himself. He has no business doing it. I told him not to go over there and start explaining Vietnam; talk about others things until they brought it up, [then] he could answer it. But he just did it. I think maybe we ought to send him something from what you said today.² So, I guess that tickers will have it over there. So, you could say that we replied affirmatively, definitely, and positively, and they again said no.

Rusk: I'll get my transcript right over to him.

President: I think that would be good. Now, I see you're going to be on "Today,"³ in the morning. I think that if they ask that question—or they ought to ask it—on did we harden ourselves, I think we ought to say no. We've taken the position that if they want us to stop, they had to be reciprocate [*sic*], and say, "Now, don't you think this would

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and Rusk, March 28, 1967, 4:14 p.m., Tape F67.10, Side A, PNO 2. No classification marking. This transcript was prepared in the Office of the Historian specifically for this volume.

² For Rusk's statement, which was critical of the North Vietnamese leadership for its apparent rejection of the recent peace formula proposed by U Thant, see Department of State *Bulletin*, April 17, 1967, pp. 618–624.

³ The "Today" show, a morning news program on broadcast television.

be unreasonable if we said to them we demand that you stop everything in South Vietnam while we continue to bomb; well, then, don't you think its unreasonable when they say to us you stop everything and we'll continue." You've used that three or four times, and it always makes a hit with me and I think everybody else listening to it. And then I'd answer Bobby and hit him hard. Not Bobby himself, but I would just say that the President said, "We'll do more than we've ever agreed to do before. We'll not only stop bombing; if you'll stop infiltrating, we'll stop augmentation. We'll do something extra. Now, if this doesn't suit you, you tell us what you want to do," and he left it wide open, and then came along. Nobody can defend Ho Chi Minh when he's acting that way. Some something like that, because that's got everybody confused. They say "Why did we get harder?" and we don't really hit it head on, and I think we got to.

Rusk: I'll do that in the morning. Thank you.

President: Right.

123. Telegram From the Mission to the United Nations to the Department of State¹

New York, March 29, 1967, 2331Z.

4640. Re: Vietnam. I saw SYG this noon to talk over release of his proposals and our reply yesterday² and to ascertain nature of NVNese reply. Bunche and Pedersen³ were present.

SYG said he had decided to release texts yesterday morning after press had reported Hanoi reaction and in light inevitability continued speculation on its contents. He noted I had agreed this would be acceptable when Bunche had told me about it on telephone yesterday

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Exdis. Received at 8:08 p.m.

² On March 27 the DRV Foreign Ministry released a statement categorically rejecting Thant's initiative, notably asserting that "The United Nations has absolutely no right to interfere in any way in the Vietnam question." The full text of the statement is in *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1967, pp. 892–893. Information on the reaction of UN officials is scheduled for publication in *Foreign Relations*, 1964–1968, volume XXXIII. In a speech given on the occasion of the visit of officials of the Government of Afghanistan, the President publicly accepted Thant's plan on March 28. See *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson*, 1967, Book I, pp. 396–398.

³ Ralph Bunche, UN Under Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs, and Richard Pederson, Deputy U.S. Representative in the Security Council.

morning. I said I agreed that in circumstances he had no choice and thought NVNese could not take exception to what he had done.

SYG said he had been guarded in his answers to questions about NVNese reply and in his general answers in press conf because he wanted to protect his future utility. Consequently he did not want be critical about Hanoi position. I expressed view dust would now have to settle for awhile. SYG agreed.

SYG said he had one request to make of us, that was that we not play up too much that we had accepted his proposal and Hanoi had rejected it. In particular he did not want "friends in Moscow," who were of course informed throughout, to be embarrassed. He hoped we would feel that our public statements yesterday were sufficient and that we would not have to say much more at this point.

I told him we had always thought progress could best be made through private contacts and agreed on desirability of preserving his own capabilities. I noted, however, that we had public relations problems of our own and that it was necessary for our people to understand situation. In this connection I read him reports from several foreign correspondents which had been received by our USIA officers. Reports stated Narasimhan (UN) had been consulted last night by them about SYG's reaction to US reply and that Narasimhan had told them on background basis that SYG considered our reply to be negative.

SYG said he would look into the matter. No such statement had been authorized. In his statement yesterday he had refused to characterize any replies and this was position he intended to maintain. He had been asked by his press officer, in connection with normal press briefing for today, what he should say on this point. SYG had told him to stand strictly on his refusal yesterday to characterize the replies.

I told SYG I had also been approached by number of correspondents who wished further background info and had been considering talking to them, but in light of SYG's comments about undesirability of further discussion at this point would not do so.

I then asked SYG whether he could give me any info on contents Hanoi's reply. SYG said reply had come through Moscow. (He did not say when he had received it but we assume from co-lateral info about his contacts with Fedorenko that he had received either preliminary or definitive reply by Friday.) He said it was first time in three years he had received written reply from Hanoi. Also stated reply had been friendly in tone throughout.

SYG said Hanoi's first point was complaint that he had told them in Rangoon he would not make his proposals public before he got NVNese reply. Bunche interjected to say that in context this statement seemed to mean they felt SYG had told them he would not give proposal to US before he had received their views. SYG said there seemed

to have been complete misunderstanding. He had given no assurances that he would not give proposals to US. He noted, however, that the direct statement in their reply related to assurances he would not publicize proposals before receiving their reply. Of course he had not done so. He thought perhaps part of reason for Hanoi's reaction was because of announcement about SYG's plan from Saigon and Saigon's statement several days ago that they had made proposals for direct talks to Hanoi. I noted that what Saigon had said about SYG's plan appeared to have been inadvertent.

SYG said Hanoi's second point was that his first step equated the aggressor and victim of aggression and that it was "advantageous to US." They had not commented on his second and third steps.

Hanoi's third point was to thank him for his interest and his desire for peace and to say they appreciated his motivation. SYG noted this was very friendly para but his interpretation was that they did not want him to carry on.

Fourth Hanoi point was that UN had nothing to do with Vietnam.

I told SYG we thought no one ought to be advantaged or disadvantaged by a ceasefire. That was why we thought it would be advisable to have preliminary talks through him or directly or in some other form. If Hanoi was so disposed we would be glad to carry on a dialogue through SYG to assure no one was advantaged or disadvantaged by a ceasefire. SYG then added that Hanoi had also commented he had made his proposals while US was escalating the war.

I replied that if they had Guam meeting in mind SYG should know that meeting did not deal substantially with military matters and that basic purpose was to introduce our new diplomatic team to Saigon leadership. I also noted we had made special effort to reply to SYG's proposals before Guam meeting so as to indicate they were not connected.

SYG then said he thought we should know he had received info on Tues, March 21 from source close to Moscow that USSR and China had settled problem of transportation of supplies to NVN. He said source was reliable but it difficult to get confirmation and that Fedorenko had had no info.

I told SYG we had also had recent report of unknown reliability that he should know about, i.e. that there had been great disposition in Hanoi to respond more affirmatively to concept of negots but that Peking had intervened and threatened a coup in Hanoi if they accepted such proposals. SYG said he thought this was possible. Noted that Colonel Lau in Rangoon had stressed Hanoi's historical independence and determination to maintain it.

I also asked SYG whether he had any info on degree to which Hanoi was dependent on China for its supplies. Told him some of our

reports indicated 70 percent of their outside supplies came from China. SYG said he had no independent info. He understood heavy arms generally came from USSR but small arms and rice came from China. I indicated that if source of supplies was problem in Hanoi's posture this was something that could be talked about as well.

Goldberg

124. Telephone Conversation Between President Johnson and Postmaster General Lawrence O'Brien¹

Washington, March 30, 1967, 9:23 a.m.

O'Brien: [Robert Kennedy has put himself in] this position, and he knows that it's not politically good for him. I don't know what you do with that kind of situation. But I started talking about things like Model Cities and, you know, our basic program. I said, "You know, Bob, what we ought to be doing is fighting Republicans, for Christ-sakes," and God, frankly, I thought it was a hell of a meeting. I didn't ask for the meeting. He said, "Gee, I'd like to get together," and he came down, he had lunch with me and we spent two hours on a very confidential basis. And Christ, the day after we had that meeting, he went to New York, and made a statement in the press that he was looking forward to campaigning as hard as he could for you. And so I thought to myself, "Well, that's a little bit of a sign of improvement." Then, my God, a week later, I look in the paper and find his comment on the Ho Chi Minh letter.² So I'll be damned if I could figure that out. I haven't talked to him since. But he certainly—he told me he wanted to do everything possible he could in the 1968 campaign starting immediately; that he wanted no Goddamned involvement with any peace-maker in the country that was trying to use him in any primary or anything else and that there would be absolutely nothing like that happen, and that anything that I wanted to suggest to him on a day-to-day basis for him to do, and he'd appreciate having my advice and counsel and he'd follow it through.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and O'Brien, March 30, 1967, 9:23 a.m., Tape F67.10, Side A, PNO 4. No classification marking. This transcript was prepared in the Office of the Historian specifically for this volume.

² Kennedy decried the President's letter to Ho as a hardening of the U.S. Government's conditions for negotiations at the time of its public release on March 21.

President: Well, let me ask you this, Larry. Does he not realize that when he and Ribicoff³ get on there and say that I'm no friend of the poor on television and then come along here on the draft and knock the ass out of me on that and then they come along here on Vietnam and they hit the hell out of us on that and then they come along with these stories about calling me a son-of-a-bitch—Nick didn't leak that, and Rostow didn't leak it, and I didn't leak it, and it didn't happen.⁴ But I'm told by a good man I've known 25 years in this town that his people called him up, and asked him to come up, and told him how Bobby chewed me out, and how I chewed him out, and how Bobby said "I don't have to listen to this" and all that kind of stuff. And his people leaked that. Now it seems to me that if he's as wise as we would hope he is, that he could see that is damaging pretty generally to him and to me. I don't believe either of us profit from it. I believe that if either of us do, the Manchester book, and that I believe that I do. I don't believe he does. Now, I may be wrong.

O'Brien: No, you're right.

President: But I believe I am right. Now it seems to me the principal beneficiaries are the Republicans. Now let's assume that he wants to be President tomorrow. Let's just assume that—I believe that to be true. I think that he'd be President tomorrow if he could do it, so let's assume he does. It doesn't seem to me that with the President in here and in charge and willing to use it and to play anyway he needs to, although I've tried my best to play fair with Jack Kennedy—I think I have; my conscience is very, very clear on that point and I think on Vietnam that he's right where I am and I'm carrying out his policy—but let's just assume that he decided that he would try to defeat me for President. I don't honestly believe that if he did that he could possibly win because I just believe that my state and twenty others would be in revolt. I think that it would be a hell of a lot worse than Teddy Roosevelt and Taft⁵ because I'm in the Presidency and I've got the folks. Now, so I don't think he'd do that. I don't see why he wants us to have a bad record and to be defeated in '68 because then they take all this power that he could get in '72 if he wants to be President. I don't get their reasoning. Now, he's got Peace Corps people; Bill [Fulbright] says this Mankiewicz and Walinsky,⁶ whatever his name is; maybe Ken Gal-

³ Senator Abraham Ribicoff (D-CT).

⁴ Reference is to Kennedy's February 6 meeting with the President; see footnote 2, Document 38.

⁵ Reference is to the Presidential election of 1912 when former President Theodore Roosevelt and sitting President William Howard Taft split the Republican Party, allowing the Democratic candidate, Woodrow Wilson, to win the election.

⁶ Frank Mankiewicz and Adam Walinsky, staff assistants to Robert Kennedy.

braith and Schlesinger⁷—they directed Stevenson's⁸ campaign in '56, maybe they'll direct him. But I can't see from their angle, if they're interested in nothing but themselves, why it's to their advantage to make weak at all—the stronger they are, it's, hell, Kennedy made his man President; he carried on a good job, now let's take another man that Kennedy's interested in and make him President"—looks like that'd be the damn line. I don't see how they get anywhere with defeating us in '68 or weakening us in '68.

O'Brien: Well, they don't, and it's a completely stupid situation. But what you have to remember, and Arthur Schlesinger is adviser to the guy, and incidentally I told Bobby just what I'm telling you, that [if] Arthur Schlesinger is adviser to a guy, he's getting advice from about as stupid an individual politically as I've ever met in my life, and he's a completely irresponsible guy. You travel that path, they'll send you right down the Goddamn drain. And I said to Bobby, "I'll tell you, that potentially you're the leader of the Democratic Party in the future, and that future is down the road some years." And I said, "Of course the way these fellows are steering you, you could wind up the leader of the New Left, you know," and I told him exactly that, and frankly, he didn't disagree with me at all. He said, "Well, Goddamnit I know that I've fallen back and I know that I've got problems," and I said that "Well, Christ, I read in a magazine that a couple of guys whose names I can't even recall but are the new leaders of the New Left, they're up at your apartment advising you." I said "Christ, that's a hell of a long way over to a road that I never figured you'd travel." And I don't know those staff guys, but he's got one fellow, that they tell me, who's the worst bomb-thrower that ever lived—some guy who thinks Stokely Carmichael's⁹ a conservative—and those are the people that you're listening to every day of the week. Now I said to him, "Finally, the proof of the pudding is this: we've got a Goddamn mean situation going into '68, we've got a tough Congress, we've got a hell of a good program on the books—we're looking for new breakthroughs, and let's take Model Cities," and I went right over the failure of these people that are supposedly so interested in the cities to try to present amendments and work with Muskie,¹⁰ and I said "The proof of this over the next year will be how the hell much effort is being expended on behalf of the President's program, which is the Party's program, and how much effort is going to be expended fighting Republicans? It's as clear as that." And he left me after 2 hours saying, "Well, will you keep in

⁷ John Kenneth Galbraith, Ambassador to India, 1961–1963, and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Special Assistant to President John F. Kennedy.

⁸ Adlai Stevenson, the Democratic Party's Presidential nominee in 1952 and 1956.

⁹ Founding member of the Black Panther Party.

¹⁰ Senator Edmund Muskie (D-ME).

touch with me, and I'd appreciate having your advice as we go along this road." And I said, "Well, okay, if that's the way you want it, let's see how it works." He was Goddamn concerned, Mr. President. I know him well enough to figure him there. He's arrogant and he's, you know, he can go off half-cocked. I've known this kid since 1951, and boy I've had some problems with him over the years. But he's never gotten anything from me when he's had to talk to me except total candor right from the shoulder, because what the hell, I'm not trying to play any game. And that's what he got that day and he took it in great style, and said that what I was saying made a hell of a lot of sense; he appreciated the comments I had made, and "By God, let's go out and work."

President: All right now, let's get any other name that you can. What is your evaluation, if you had to pick the two best ones we've considered, who would you look at now?

O'Brien: Well, I would say at this point that I'd be looking at Booton and Sanders,¹¹ and then the White House I'd be looking at Jimmy.¹²

President: Okay, thank you. I'll talk to you. You get in to see me before I leave tomorrow.

O'Brien: Okay, Mr. President.

¹¹ Bernard Booton, former Administrator of the Small Business Administration, and Harold "Barefoot" Sanders, Legal Counsel to the President.

¹² James "Jim" Jones.

125. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam¹

Washington, April 1, 1967, 2:38 p.m.

167136. For Amb Lodge from the Secretary. Ref: Saigon's 21308.²

1. We were very much interested in your conversation with Ky reported reftel and felt that the line you took with him (para 4) represented correct "equi-distant" posture for us to be taking at present time when Ky and Thieu have not yet worked out question of candidacy. Consider it important that we not appear to be getting between them or making choice in one direction or other, or, for that matter, as between military and civilian candidates.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Exdis. Drafted by Unger, cleared by Walsh, and approved by Rusk.

² Document 118.

2. With this in mind we were wondering whether we should not leave same impression with Thieu so that he, no less than Ky, will know our thinking on this point. He provided an opening for this in the comments at his and Ky's press conference before their departure from Guam when he explained that his position was just like Ky's and that if Ky should run he would support him. To continue the analogy, "there are many other things he could do besides being President" and specifically we know of the improvements he would like to bring about in the ARVN and the leadership he could provide for it. It would also be desirable for Thieu to realize you had made similar point to Ky.

3. With regard to the Presidential candidacy the other thought still very much on our minds is the desirability of it being understood that the ticket which includes a leading military figure would also provide for prominent civilian participation in the Prime Ministerial post. Similarly, we can see the value of prominent military participation on Suu's or Huong's tickets.

4. We would be interested in having your current thinking on these matters.

Rusk

126. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, April 3, 1967, 1033Z.

21973. For the Secretary from Lodge.

1. This is in reply to request in your 167136² for my current thinking on forthcoming Presidential election:

2. I agree wholeheartedly with your paragraph 1. The only basis on which we should ever get involved would be if there were a candidate of substance who was strongly anti-American; happily there is no such person on the horizon.

3. Thus we have everything to lose and nothing to gain by backing one of the existing possible candidates. If we pick the loser, we obviously look foolish and have needlessly created a problem for our-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Exdis. Received at 8:09 a.m.

² Document 125.

selves. But if we pick a winner, we will thereafter be held responsible for all his mistakes. We have a strong interest in maintaining a relationship with the chief of the government which nothing more nor less than correct, in which we keep our word on those possible rare occasions when we give it, and in which we are thus regarded with respect. We should not “get into bed,” as we did in the case of the late President Diem, with the result that we were held responsible for his errors—and with some justice.

4. As regards your paragraph 2, I quite agree that we should leave the same impression with Thieu. Although I have seen him quite recently, he has not really given me an opening and I doubt whether I should make a special *démarche*. On March 25, Ky raised the matter with me, which made it easy for me to comment. If an early occasion arises to see Thieu, I will have this point in mind.

5. I quite agree on the desirability of having a prominent civilian on a ticket headed by a military candidate for President (Thieu or Ky). The optimum arrangement would probably be announcement in advance of the choice of a prominent civilian (hopefully a capable administrator) for Prime Minister as well as a leading civilian politician as Vice Presidential candidate. This would permit fuller regional as well as military-civilian balance on the military ticket. If there should only be one civilian on the military slate, which would certainly be less desirable, then it might be better for him to be a candidate for Vice President rather than for Prime Minister. The Vice President, after all, is elected whereas the Prime Minister is appointed.

6. As you know, there are really no civilian politicians in this country in our meaning of the word. The two leading civilians mentioned as candidates are survivors from the days of conspiracy against the French and against Diem, and are estimable patriots, but neither Suu nor Huong would be likely to run the government with anything like the efficiency of Thieu or Ky. We hope that more capable civilian politicians will emerge during the first Presidential term.

7. With respect to your paragraph 3, I consider it important that there be a recognized military man on only one ticket, not only for symbolic reasons but so as to hold the military together during and after the election. Keeping the military together is the “law of the prophets” as far as Viet-Nam is concerned, and will be for some time. There should not be a political contest, for example, involving military men on both sides—or on more than two sides. I would expect—and hope—that one ticket would emerge with Thieu or Ky as candidate for President and that the opposing two or more tickets will be exclusively civilian in their make-up.

127. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in the Soviet Union¹

Washington, April 5, 1967, 7 p.m.

169339. Literally Eyes Only for Ambassador Thompson. Please arrange delivery to DRV mission Moscow by means you consider best suited to maximize chances of early transmission to Hanoi following letter from President to Ho:²

Begin Text:

His Excellency Ho Chi Minh, President, Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

Dear Mr. President:

I was, of course, disappointed that you did not feel able to respond positively to my letter to you of February 8.³

But I would recall to you the words Abraham Lincoln addressed to his fellow Americans in 1861:

"Suppose you go to war, you cannot fight always; and when, after much loss on both sides, and no gain on either, you cease fighting, the identical old questions as to terms of intercourse are again upon you."

In that spirit I wish to reaffirm the offers I made in my earlier letter. We remain prepared to talk quietly with your representatives to establish the terms of a peaceful settlement and then bring the fighting to a stop; or we are prepared to undertake steps of mutual de-escalation which might make it easier for discussions of a peaceful settlement to take place. Talks to either of these ends could take place in Moscow, Rangoon, or elsewhere.

Despite public discussion of our previous exchange of views, our responsibilities to our own peoples and to the world remain; and those responsibilities include bringing the war in Southeast Asia to an end at the earliest possible date.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET. Top Secret; Priority; Nodis; Sunflower Double Plus. Drafted from text received from the White House, cleared by Read, and approved by Rusk.

² The message was delivered by Akalovsky to the DRV Embassy at 12:40 p.m. on April 6. At 4 p.m. Akalovsky telephoned the Embassy but was told by Hoang Manh'Tu that he was unaware of such a message. At 5:45 p.m. the message was returned to the U.S. Embassy with the following marking in French on the envelope: "Not accepted! Return to sender." (Telegrams 4284 and 4294 from Moscow, April 6; *ibid.*, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER) Dobrynin later suggested that the lack of a signature on this telegram may have led to its rejection. (Telegram 4590 from Moscow, April 25; *ibid.*)

³ See Document 82.

It is surely clear that one day we must agree to reestablish and make effective the Geneva Accords of 1954 and 1962; let the people of South Viet Nam determine in peace the kind of government they want; let the peoples of North and South Viet Nam determine peacefully whether and how they should unite; and permit the peoples of Southeast Asia to turn all their energies to their economic and social development.

You and I will be judged in history by whether we worked to bring about this result sooner rather than later.

I venture to address you directly again in the hope that we can find the way to rise above all other considerations and fulfill that common duty. I would be glad to receive your views on these matters.

Sincerely, Lyndon B. Johnson, April 6, 1967. *End Text.*

Rusk

128. Telegram From the Embassy in the Soviet Union to the Department of State¹

Moscow, April 6, 1967, 2043Z.

4299. State 169715.² When I discussed ABM³ with Kosygin he said important thing in this area was confidence and frankly indicated that Soviets had lost confidence in our word. In context of our discussion of Vietnam I had strong impression he considered our bombing close to Hanoi and Haiphong and our more recent escalation as breach of what they wrongly or rightly thought was our policy in Vietnam affair. There have been many indications from Soviets that they would sit still for almost anything we might do in South Vietnam but our bombing in the North was humiliating them particularly when we hit northern part of North Vietnam not directly related to invasion routes. In a recent conversation Yuri Zhukov⁴ referred to Soviet restraint but hinted this could not go on much longer and mentioned specifically pressure to send Soviet volunteers.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET. Secret; Flash; Nodis. Passed to the White House at 4:25 p.m.

² Dated April 6. (Ibid., ORG 7 U)

³ Reference is to discussions regarding antiballistic missile systems.

⁴ The principal international correspondent for the Soviet newspaper *Pravda*.

While I think Soviets will go to great lengths to avoid direct involvement, actions such as sending volunteers, stirring up Korean affair or other bits of unpleasantness are real possibilities if we go much farther. Moreover since they are in my opinion genuinely convinced that bombing alone will not bring war to an end, they wonder if our purpose is not chiefly to demonstrate their impotence to protect one of their allies with consequent effects on their general policy toward US.

Believe my views on specific target alternatives are already on record. If we must do more in the North I would hope escalation could be confined to southern part of North Vietnam.

Thompson

129. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, April 6, 1967, 0945Z.

22283. Subject: Elections, election laws and security for candidates.

1. During a conversation April 6 with Prime Minister Ky I had an opportunity to discuss a range of questions related to elections in Vietnam.

A. Electoral Laws

2. I observed that the GVN had asked the Assembly to complete the electoral laws for the elections of President, Vice President, upper and lower houses by the end of April. We felt that close cooperation between the GVN and the Assembly would be necessary even to come near the deadline and, more importantly, to write satisfactory laws. We believed that there was no time to be lost in notifying the Assembly as soon as possible regarding the broad outlines of what should be in the law. I added that electoral laws could be of great importance in determining whether the elections would be fair and free; whether they provided equality for all candidates; or whether they contained convinc-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Exdis. Received at 8:29 a.m.

ing safeguards against election fraud. I also thought it was of the utmost importance that the law should try to insure that the winner had a respectable mandate—40 percent of the vote or more.²

3. In reply, Ky said that he had already talked with the members of the Assembly. He said that they planned to ask for technical assistance from the Ministry of Revolutionary Development and this Ministry would, of course, provide it.

4. *Comment:* I raised this subject at this time in the hope that exchanges of view between the GVN and Constituent Assembly would commence immediately rather than delay the Assembly's work on this difficult subject, as it did during the constitution drafting process. *End comment.*

B. Security at Election Time

5. I stressed the importance of security in this connection. As regards the candidates for President, there could be no doubt that the assassination of someone of the stature of Suu or Huong³ could have a devastating effect, possibly destroying everything that Ky had labored to build up during the last year. In that sense, it could be a bigger defeat than either Suu or Huong could inflict while alive. It was important for the government to provide security for Suu and Huong, and it was important for the whole world to know it. I would personally be happy to see them followed around by a jeep full of policemen as I was.

6. Ky said that he had offered security to Suu who had refused, saying that he was so popular that nobody would ever do him any harm.

7. I said that I was not sure that this was enough. I believed a written offer would be in order and also I thought that he should provide the security whether Suu consented or not. Ky's record in this regard should be absolutely beyond any possible reproach.

8. He agreed and said he would act in this way.

9. I also brought up the recent reports that six Constituent Assembly Deputies had received dud grenades and threatening letters

² Ambassador Bunker reported in telegram 25837, May 16, that the Assembly, under government pressure, voted down a provision for a run-off election. "This episode is one more example of the fact that there are only certain lengths to which we can properly go in seeking to influence and advise the GVN or the Assembly on such matters," Ambassador Bunker noted. "The final decision is theirs." (Ibid.)

³ Telegram 22404 from Saigon, April 7, summarized the various threats against Deputies, and quoted one Vietnamese source as suggesting that General Nguyen Ngoc Loan, a strong supporter of Ky, was behind the activities. (Ibid.) In telegram 185018 to Saigon, April 29, the Department requested that Bunker make a strong *démarche* to Ky on the matter. (Ibid.)

signed by a group of “progressive journalists.” I said that some people had tried to plant the idea with me that this had been done by the Director of Police.⁴

10. I said that I had told them that this was obviously impossible. I said that the Director of Police acted under the orders of Prime Minister Ky and that I knew that Prime Minister Ky was much too broad-minded and farsighted a man to go in for these picayune (“mesquin”), French-style, would-be-clever tactics. Here again, I said that Prime Minister Ky’s best interest lies in providing security for everybody involved in the political life of Viet-Nam, and having it well known by them that they were doing it, so that when they talked to any newspapermen this fact would be reflected.

11. *Comment:* I feel that what I said about the French may have a persuasive effect. Ky is very critical of French tactics and of the methods which the French have used here to sow suspicion and division. And in his own heart, he is happiest when he feels that he is not acting like the French. He expressed his agreement with my remarks. *End comment.*

12. I congratulated him on the successful carrying out of the first round of local elections. This would have to be continued by providing firm and continuing support to the new village and hamlet organs of government.

C. Presidential Election

13. I was happy to learn that his view of how the Presidential elections should develop is similar to that expressed in our Saigon 21973.⁵ He agreed with me that a military man who is a candidate for President would choose a civilian as Vice Presidential candidate who was politically symbolic and who complemented the Presidential candidate’s political attributes. He also agreed that the Presidential candidate would announce whom he would appoint as Prime Minister, and this should not be politically symbolic but should be a civilian known for his executive ability, for his brains and for his drive. I asked: “Someone like the Minister of Economy, Mr. Hanh?” and Ky agreed. Thus Ky is thinking in terms of three names per ticket.

14. *Comment:* This means that there could be a situation in which there would be one slate with a military man for President, a civilian for Vice President, and a civilian announced as the Prime Minister in case of victory, and, in addition, two or maybe three slates in which all the positions would be held by civilians, for a possible total of four

⁴ A reference to Loan.

⁵ Document 126.

slates, making at least eleven individuals involved in the campaign who would be civilians and one who would be military.

15. This may be better “scenery” than a consensus situation in which the military candidate has been able to organize practically everybody for him. Yet it could mean some real non-Communist political opposition, which is essential. It is clearly much better than having a contest between two military men, which could be disastrous. It does carry with it the risk that the winner will not have 40 percent of the vote. It does seem to give the whole thing as “civilian” an appearance as possible, given the realities. The problem is quite baffling since there are no polls in which I have confidence and there are no previous election figures, and it is hard at this stage to have even an educated guess on, for example, how strongly Ky would run against Suu.

End comment.

E [sic]. Significance of the Constitution

16. We then had a talk on the broad psychological implications of the promulgation of the Constitution, with me saying that this was an event which transcended in importance the actual substantive features of the Constitution itself—important though these were. The Constitution, I ventured, symbolized some very new and constructive attitudes which were at work in Viet-Nam: first, a spirit of self-confidence; second, a spirit of moderation, of live and let live, of striving for unity; and third, an attitude of responsibility—of being willing to take responsibility for their own actions and not act irresponsibly thinking that somebody would bail them out. I said that these were all traits which colonialism traditionally sought to quash.

17. He said, “This is exactly what I think about it. And I hope it means that now that we have been able to think and act this way with regard to the Constitution this state of mind will become widespread in all our other affairs.”

Lodge

130. Memorandum for the Record¹

Palm Desert, California, April 6, 1967.

SUBJECT

Meeting with General Eisenhower, 6 April 1967

1. I met with General Eisenhower for two and one-half hours, 6 April 1967, at his residence at Palm Desert, California. The purpose of the meeting was to give him a current report on the war in Vietnam, reflecting therein principal matters touched on at the recent conference of the President in Guam. For the latter purpose, I drew primarily upon a summary recently given to me orally by General Wheeler, having in mind my visit to General Eisenhower.

2. Beginning with South Vietnam, I reviewed recent major operations, noting particularly Operation Junction City in War Zone C.² I indicated the military operations are going well. Overall, the military situation continues to improve. The Communists show signs indicating they desperately desire a victory, but each effort to achieve one results in heavy losses to them. I also covered river and coastal operations, and the continued use of B-52s. General Eisenhower referred to press reports he had seen regarding large numbers of defectors under the Chieu Hoi program. I told him they ran more than 1,000 a week in March—some 5,000 for the month—and this may reflect the impact our sustained operations are having, especially on those other than dedicated hard-core Communists.

3. General Eisenhower discussed at length the pacification phase, and the emphasis this should receive. In response to his questions, I told him this is showing progress, although movement is slow. He said he regards this phase and the military operations as intertwined. I told him General Westmoreland also considers that military operations and local security form a single war. In further discussion, I said that further steps are being considered to strengthen pacification efforts and

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Name File, Eisenhower. Top Secret. Drafted by Goodpaster on April 7.

² Beginning on February 22 through May 14, MACV launched Operation Junction City against Communist strongholds in War Zone C, the area northwest of Saigon to the Cambodian border. The goal was to inflict extensive casualties upon the enemy by the utilization of concentrated air power, artillery barrages, and pitched battles. This practical application of attrition strategy had mixed results, for although 164 enemy base camps were destroyed and 2,728 enemy KIAs were inflicted, the headquarters of COSVN was never found. See Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960–1968*, Part III, pp. 42-5–42-7.

their tie-in to the military campaign. It was my impression that he felt a solution to the problem of organizing effectively for pacification was long overdue, and that he would favor placing it under General Westmoreland. Referring to the appointment of Ambassador Bunker, he said he has an extremely high opinion of him. Ambassador Bunker's experience in India, and understanding of Asians, should stand him in good stead.³ In further discussion, I indicated General Wheeler believes that Ambassador Bunker, like Ambassador Lodge, will carefully avoid getting into military operations. General Eisenhower expressed his strong endorsement, and reiterated his strong view that officials in Washington, 10,000 miles from the conflict, should not attempt to control the conduct of operations. He recalled that General Marshall, during the Battle of the Bulge, had sent him a personal message stating that he had issued instructions that General Eisenhower was not to be bothered, and that if he nevertheless received messages from the War Department, he should discard them.

4. I next covered operations against North Vietnam. In the air campaign, heavy pressure continues, and thermal power plants are included in the targetting. The weather has been bad, and has restricted actual strikes. His principal comment was that a course of "gradualism" in conducting air operations is bound to be ineffective, and that operations within the scope now conducted would have been vastly more effective if employed from the outset. He referred to the example he has previously given of attacking a battalion with two battalions, and taking heavy losses, while an attack with a division would suffer far fewer losses. He also expressed concern over the amount of public discussion of what targets we will or will not hit, since such discussion is bound to be of advantage to the enemy.

5. Turning next to Laos, I reported on continued air attacks against the Communist LOC. The southwest monsoon should be beginning during the next month or six weeks, and this will curtail the Communist movement of matériel. I also reported that covert ground operations into Laos continue to expand (I have previously indicated to him that these, if carefully expanded and intensified, can be of strategic value in impeding Communist logistical throughput).

6. General Eisenhower asked about troop strengths and whether additional forces are contemplated. I told him the Joint Chiefs of Staff are reviewing possible additional forces in connection with operations in the delta, or against the two NVA divisions estimated to be in Cambodia, or the three NVA divisions estimated to be in the general area of the Demilitarized Zone. I stressed that there has been no decision on this matter—it is simply under examination. General Eisenhower

³ Bunker was Ambassador to India, 1956–1961.

asked whether our forces go into Cambodia. I told him they do not. The NVA forces in and near the DMZ are being pounded hard by air and artillery, and by ground action south of the DMZ. I also reported on the progress being made in developing and producing weapons for use in barrier-type operations along the DMZ and adjoining infiltration routes in Laos.

7. I next touched on the political situation within South Vietnam. Here also there is improvement as pacification proceeds. Also, the adoption of the constitution, and the excellent turn-out in the local elections to date are highly encouraging. On the international side, the intemperate response by Ho Chi Minh to the President's sober and constructive letter has tended to clear the air.⁴ I added that the President has made clear he has no intention of stopping any military action unless or until there is a substantial quid pro quo. I told him there is some evidence that the authorities in Hanoi are receiving vastly inflated reports of U.S. losses from their fighting forces, and that they may believe that opposition within the United States to the President on the Vietnam war is far more effective and influential than it is, and could cause the United States to give up the fight as the French did, and that this may be leading them to fight on despite their steadily worsening military situation.

8. General Eisenhower asked concerning NVA logistic use of the DMZ. I said this has been well established. Our air and naval interdiction is having a heavy impact, however. Although this cannot be determined in exact terms, the best professional judgment is that it has been of major importance in limiting the frequency, scale and intensity of Communist attacks on our forces in South Vietnam.

[Here follows discussion of China, NATO, Cyprus, and Iran.]

G
Lt General, USA

⁴ Reference is to the President's February 2 letter (see Document 32). For Ho's response, see Document 82. Hanoi released the exchange on March 21. See Department of State *Bulletin*, April 10, 1967, pp. 595–597.

131. Letter From the President's Special Assistant (Komer) to the Deputy Secretary of Defense (Vance)¹

Washington, April 7, 1967.

Dear Cy:

Any mention of force increases beyond US Program Four² level simply underlines the urgency of getting more for our money out of ARVN. This is not my business, but I want to suggest that nothing could be more useful than giving Creighton Abrams a healthy charge on this before he goes to Saigon.³

Under our prodding, MACV has paid more attention to revamping ARVN in the last six months than in the previous eighteen. As reported after my February trip, progress is being made. But it is still far short of what could be achieved if we really set our minds to it. Porter and the knowledgeable civilians in Saigon (e.g. Dan Ellsberg)⁴ insist that, while 50 ARVN battalions have been transferred to pacification on paper, there has not in most cases been much real change. Nor will a two-week retraining course by a JGS/MACV mobile training team do more than start the process of retraining ARVN battalions. I am also surprised to find that according to MACV's own figures only about 40% of the RF and PF (at a quick calculation) are engaged in what MACV calls "direct support of RD," i.e. pacification.

The recent VC attack on Saigon police station and the raid on Quang Tri city are good examples of ARVN inadequacy. I am personally convinced that nothing would give us a quicker and cheaper increase in effectiveness than an all-out effort to revamp, re-inspire, and revivify ARVN, RF, and PF. These assets are already largely bought and paid for. The US advisory structure is already in place. The chief added input needed is more top management attention. Westy confessed to me just after Guam that he had been forced to neglect the ARVN advisory role because he had to shift to managing growing US forces.

Hence a respectful suggestion—why not do up for Abrams to take out with him say a ten-point program for revamping ARVN which he

¹ Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OSD Files: FRC 72 A 2468, Vietnam 380 Pacification 1967. Secret; Eyes Only. An attached note indicates that Komer sent the letter through McNaughton with the following warning: "Don't let this get around, or I'll be in trouble." A notation on the letter reads: "Discuss with Mr. McNamara."

² Program Four was the planned deployment to bring the strength of U.S. forces in Vietnam up to 87 battalions and 469,000 troops by mid-1968.

³ General Abrams was the incoming Deputy Commander of MACV, a position whose duties included the military aspects of the pacification program.

⁴ Daniel Ellsberg was detailed to the Mission's Office of Civil Operations.

could sell to Westy and then the JGS? I would be happy to contribute discreetly to any such exercise. The basic proposition is that with about one million Vietnamese military and civilians already being supported by us, there would be far less need for major added US forces if only we could get a marginal increase in the effectiveness of the GVN's military, pacification, and civil side assets.

Sincerely,

Bob

132. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, April 8, 1967, 0930Z.

22498. 1. During a talk with General Thieu April 8, I discussed the following matters related to elections and Presidential candidates.

A. Security of Presidential and Other Candidates

2. I stressed to Thieu substantially what I had stressed to Ky concerning the importance of getting really adequate security protection to the Presidential candidates.² If anything were to happen to one of them, I said, it could undo much of the work that had been accomplished in the last year. He seemed to think about it and finally agreed with me. I also stressed the Deputies and those who are running in local elections. I referred to the Deputies who are receiving candy boxes containing grenades painted red and asked who he thought was doing it. He said that literally anyone could do it, that these were normal Vietnamese tactics and it could come from a disaffected nationalist. One thing was sure: when this kind of thing went on, it threatened the prestige of the police.

B. Presidential Campaign

3. I then sought to carry out the instruction in State 167136.³ I began by remarking that I had been out on the *Enterprise* the day after General Thieu and General Ky had been there, and that I had been advised of General Thieu's statement, when asked, whether he would be a candidate for President, as follows: "Maybe yes, maybe no. I endorse

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Exdis.

² See Document 129.

³ Document 125.

General Ky." Then, I said, apparently General Ky had said substantially the same thing.

4. I told General Thieu that I had told General Ky—and now wished to tell him—that we thought this was a broadminded attitude and that a friendly accommodation and decision on this matter was very important.

5. I then said that it was obvious that it would not be good for any Presidential candidate in Viet-Nam to be known as the "American candidate." Neither, I said, would it be good for us. Obviously, the voters had to believe that a candidate could work with the Americans, but this is a very different thing from being an American puppet.

5. [sic] He agreed and said that any President who was elected as the "American candidate" would find his work extremely difficult thereafter. There was, however, he said, a strong belief to this effect—a "prejudice," if you will, that American money and American organization always decide such questions.

6. I recalled that when I came here in 1963,⁴ we had helped President Diem in many ways, with the result that many Vietnamese were holding us responsible for the police state methods which were then being used. It was very hard to prove them wrong when they said that we had a considerable responsibility for this. For us to sponsor Presidential candidates had a colonial flavor, would put us in a false light, and would tend to retard the encouraging progress which was being made in Viet-Nam toward developing an attitude of self-confidence and of responsibility.

7. He said that it would indeed be desirable to "wipe out this prejudice," but he thought that the only way it could be done would be by the passage of time, by facts, by the truth. As people watched the situation and saw day after day that none of these things happened which they said were going to happen they would be convinced.

8. *Comment:* We are thus on record with both Ky and Thieu of being "equidistant" and of not "getting between them or making a choice in one direction or another, or, for that matter, between military and civilian candidates," to quote from 167136.⁵ The conversation did not develop in a way to make it possible to discuss what he would "do besides being President."

C. What Thieu Said Yesterday

9. Frank McCullough, the *Time* correspondent in Hong Kong, told me the following:

⁴ Lodge's initial appointment as Ambassador to Vietnam was on August 1, 1963.

⁵ Document 125.

10. Yesterday, Friday, he received word from Thieu's press aide, Major Lam, that Thieu would like to see him. When he went to the Palace Friday afternoon, Lam said to be sure to ask Thieu about Big Minh.⁶ When McCullough went into Thieu's office, Lam came along too.

11. The conversation began with Thieu saying that Ky was really unbeatable. He was very well known; he had the police on his side; he had General Thang in effect as "campaign manager with his whole revolutionary development organization behind him"; and he had access to money and resources which nobody else had. *Comment*: I believe this is unfair to Thang. *End comment*.

12. When McCullough asked whether Thieu was willing to serve as Prime Minister under Ky, Thieu said that, of course, he would, just as Ky would serve as Prime Minister under Thieu. He never gave any evidence of any bad feeling toward Ky.

13. McCullough told me he had forgotten the suggestion which Lam had made to him about Big Minh, and that Lam in effect prodded him by telling McCullough to ask Thieu about Big Minh. When McCullough did so, Thieu said that, under the new Constitution, there was absolutely no reason why Big Minh could not come back whenever he wanted to, that no charges were pending against him, and that he would undoubtedly be the most popular candidate who could be nominated. A strong ticket would be Big Minh for President with Huong for Vice President. He, Thieu, would be glad to serve as the Prime Minister in such a government. He in effect admitted that Big Minh would not be a strong President, but the inference was that with Thieu as Prime Minister, that would not matter. It also became clear from other things which Thieu said that Thieu was in touch with Big Minh, since Thieu knew that at the moment, Big Minh was in Paris for his sister's funeral.

14. Thieu also said that it was impossible for anybody to be elected without the support of the Americans which contrasts with what he said to me this morning.

15. *Comment*: I believe it is true that Big Minh is the most popular figure in Viet-Nam and that an arrangement with Big Minh as President and Thieu as Prime Minister would be unobjectionable from our viewpoint. A ticket with Huong as Vice President would be strong and hard to defeat. Thieu is an extremely clever thinker and planner and he has undoubtedly figured out that this is his very best way to stay in a position of power. I believe that he is probably right that in a race

⁶ Duong Van Minh, the former Vietnamese Chief of State who went into exile in late 1964, was barred from returning to Vietnam in May 1965.

between Ky and him, Ky would do much better. He has evidently decided that he would rather be Prime Minister under Big Minh than Prime Minister under Ky, I presume for the obvious reason that with Big Minh he could run the show whereas Ky is much smarter and stronger than Big Minh.

16. I recommend that this is one thing which they had better work out for themselves and that we should not get involved. We are in the lucky position that any of these combinations is perfectly satisfactory from our viewpoint.

17. Foregoing is at this stage only a report of Thieu's statements and we cannot judge the degree of probability of such an arrangement being actually worked out. We will follow this closely, however, and report any info bearing on it.

18. As the Department remembers, it was Thieu who conceived and executed the plot in January 1964 whereby Big Minh and General Don, who went to bed one night with all the levers of the powers in their hands, were awakened in the middle of the night and found themselves out of office and under arrest. Yet it is true that Thieu got along very well with Big Minh in previous years and might get along very well with him again in the future.

15. If Big Minh returns, we will confront a totally new situation as regards the election of a President. Looking at it with the utmost objectivity, it will be better for the U.S. in such a situation to be represented by an Ambassador who does not know all the persons involved as intimately as I do. When Ambassador Bunker handles it in an objective way, there is a good chance that his objectivity will be accepted by everyone. I would, of course, be objective too, but I am a warm friend of Prime Minister Ky, a very good friend of Thieu, and a warm friend of Big Minh. Therefore, when the pressure began to mount, each might put out the idea that he had my goodwill and it would be much harder for me to make my objectivity believable than it would be for Ambassador Bunker.

20. McCullough says he is not filing anything, but has told New York about it and that he is "watching."

Lodge

133. Memorandum of Meeting¹

Washington, April 13, 1967, 3:30 p.m.

PARTICIPANTS

Governor Harriman
Mr. Bundy
Mr. McNaughton
Mr. Unger
Mr. Read
Mr. Cooper
Mr. Colby (for part of the meeting)

The group briefly reviewed the status of two outstanding initiatives:

a. Gromyko indicated to Ambassador Thompson that the Russians would be reluctant in assisting us in establishing direct contact with the DRV personalities at this time, and, in general, Gromyko took a very negative position. For the present, therefore, attempts to establish contacts with the DRV through the Soviets will be in suspense.

b. The Secretary approved forwarding our DMZ proposal to Ambassador Lodge for passing to General Ky.² There was some discussion as to whether we should hold up forwarding it until Foreign Minister Do arrived in Washington on Monday, April 17. It was decided, however, that we should go ahead immediately in sending the telegram to Saigon.³

Mr. Colby reviewed the Agency's approaches to the NLF. In essence, CAS is proceeding with various efforts to approach several key NLF figures. They are now running 12 cases, all "long shots". Most of these contacts are being made without the knowledge of the GVN.⁴

¹ Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Harriman Papers, Special Files, Public Service, Subject Files, Vietnam, General—Jan.–March 1967. Top Secret; Nodis. The meeting was held in Harriman's office.

² Following up on U Thant's earlier call for a cease-fire as well as one for truce talks on April 10 by the Government of Ceylon, Paul Martin, Canadian Minister for External Affairs, submitted a peace proposal on April 11 outlining a restoration of the DMZ, a standstill truce, and a return to the provisions of the Geneva agreement. For text, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1967, pp. 911–914.

³ With U.S. encouragement, on April 18 the GVN announced its support for the Canadian proposal and established a National Reconciliation program. (Meeting among Harriman, Do, and Diem, April 20; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, EA/VN Files: Lot 71 D 88, POL 1—Memcons/Departmental 1967) The U.S. Government had already endorsed another GVN peace move on April 8, namely the proposal for a 24-hour truce on Buddha's birthday, May 23. See *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1967, p. 911. On April 28 the NLF proclaimed its own cease-fire for the period May 22–24; see *ibid.*, pp. 924–925.

⁴ Chester Cooper described the efforts to engage the NLF in a separate peace process as "very thin." Direct GVN–NLF contacts would be difficult, although contacts with individual members were more promising. Concerning unilateral U.S. overtures to the NLF, he warned that "anything that would suggest to Saigon that the United States was making a deal behind the back of the GVN might poison the working relationship between Washington and Saigon." In addition, Hanoi would not permit any arrangement

Mr. Bundy reported briefly on his views with respect to Sino-Soviet relations as they affect shipments of matériel to North Vietnam. Circumstantial evidence indicated that whatever frictions may have existed between Moscow and Peking have been pretty much resolved as of late February.

The Governor discussed his views of Amb. Thompson's 6 April telegram.⁵ Governor Harriman agreed emphatically with Amb. Thompson that the Russians were humiliated at their inability to protect North Vietnam from air attacks and he felt that Moscow would respond to our escalation by providing the North Vietnamese with additional, and possibly new, weapons.⁶ He also agreed with Amb. Thompson that the Russians might increase tensions elsewhere in an effort to divert us from Vietnam. The Governor felt strongly that it would be worth an effort to meet with the Russians to see whether they could be induced to move ahead with a settlement on Vietnam. The Committee should give serious thought as to whether we should press the Soviets at this time and, if so, the best way of doing this. There is no point in just sending another letter to Kosygin; we must be prepared to discuss some substantive proposition of interest to Moscow. The Governor acknowledged that it was a serious question whether the Soviets could deliver Hanoi, but he felt that we had not really made a serious attempt to do this.

Mr. Bundy felt that the Kosygin talks in London had strained Soviet influence in Hanoi. The Russians had probably already completed a new aid deal with Hanoi and, until the additional assistance had been absorbed, Hanoi and Moscow would be unlikely to respond to offers of negotiation. There was considerable discussion as to whether we should wait at least a month before approaching the Russians; Gov. Harriman felt strongly that an early approach, if carefully implemented, would be worthwhile. Mr. Read felt that the increased Soviet aid might present opportunities as well as challenges, since Soviet in-

not in congruence with its own interests. In a covering memorandum, Cooper concluded that there was little prospect for movement by the NLF without "substantial political concessions" while there could be virtually no compromise by the GVN in the foreseeable future. (Memorandum by Cooper, April 6, attached to a memorandum from Cooper to Katzenbach, April 7; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, CSM 6 VIET S) In telegram 22406 from Saigon, April 7, Lodge argued that it was not only "premature" to open such a channel but that both the GVN and the DRV would regard the effort as "over-eagerness on our part" that would make the United States appear "weak" and would "confirm certain fears in GVN circles that our objective is a 'shotgun' marriage." (Ibid., POL 14 VIET S)

⁵ Document 128.

⁶ In an April 10 letter to Thompson, Kohler took issue with this point, asserting that it and the threat of Soviet intervention in reaction might be "just a ploy" by Soviet Premier Kosygin. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET)

fluence had probably increased in Hanoi as a consequence of the new aid agreement.⁷

Following the meeting, the Governor forwarded a memorandum to the President and the Secretary commenting on Amb. Thompson's telegram and suggesting that the Negotiations Committee be charged with the task of developing an approach to Moscow for the purpose of getting a negotiation going.⁸

⁷ In an April 14 memorandum to Hughes, Bundy requested a "careful assessment of what the Soviets may intend and may do in relation to Vietnam." Bundy considered a reported transit agreement for the shipment of Soviet supplies through China to North Vietnam to represent what appeared to be a new level of commitment by the Soviet Union to its ally. (Ibid., Bundy Files: Lot 85 D 240, Top Secret WPB Chron, Jan.–Apr. 1967) In INR Research Memorandum RSB-31 entitled "Soviet Interests and the Vietnam War," April 21, Hughes explored the complex nature of Soviet interests in Indochina. Moscow had a "strong (and even an increasing) interest" in the continuation of the war, but if the war turned against Soviet interest, which it could if there were a tactical military defeat or an extension of Chinese influence, Moscow would keep as many options open as possible to initiate negotiations. (Ibid., EA/ACA Files: Lot 69 D 277, Vietnam File, USSR 1967) But strong warnings from the Soviet Government meant to counter U.S. intensification of the war also provided evidence of greater Soviet support of Hanoi. These Soviet admonitions were offered as a means of impressing upon the United States the determination of the Soviet Union to support the DRV. The Soviet response could include increased Soviet military involvement or a halt to progress on bilateral issues, INR argued in Research Notes 340 and 349, May 2 and May 4. (Ibid.) Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) 11-11-67, May 4, suggested that statements of increasing Soviet support for North Vietnam acted as a mechanism to forestall a frustrated Johnson administration from escalating the conflict. However, the available responses by Moscow were limited. "We do not think the Soviets are prepared to resort to strong and direct threats of general war as a means to protect North Vietnam or to preserve Soviet face," the estimate concluded. (Ibid.)

⁸ In an April 13 memorandum to Rusk and the President, Harriman underscored his concern that the Soviets were prepared to prevent the collapse of the DRV and would defend it with strong measures, such as instigating actions in other troubled areas of the world. He did note the opportunity and necessity to still involve the Soviets in bringing about a settlement. (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Harriman Papers, Special Files, Public Service, Subject Files, Johnson, Lyndon 1967)

134. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, April 15, 1967, 1110Z.

23179. Personal for Bundy from Lodge.

1. During a call by former Vice President Nixon, Prime Minister Ky remarked that the election of such a man as Phan Khac Suu to be President of Viet-Nam could destroy much of what has been accomplished in the last two years, with a real risk of the Viet Cong regaining control of large elements of the country. He obviously was not in any way reflecting on Phan Khac Suu's patriotism or loyalty, but on the impossibility of a man of his age, of his lack of knowledge of modern governmental problems and of his general inadequacy to lead the country against a resourceful and determined enemy.²

2. I agree with Ky in this regard and have already said as much, both in cables and at Guam.

3. After Nixon had left, Ky discussed the forthcoming election and asked me what I thought. I said that it was very hard for me to make a prediction as to how the election would turn out as there were no previous election figures. I also did not have much confidence in public opinion polls taken in Viet-Nam because I believed that most Vietnamese, when interrogated by a poll-taker (or by anyone else), tend to tell the interrogator what they think he wants to hear. Ky laughed and said that I had it sized up absolutely right.

4. He said he thought that in the forthcoming election, organization would have a decisive effect. Most Vietnamese, he said, were still not politically minded, even though the number who were was growing. Most Vietnamese also did not have strong views concerning the various candidates because they did not know much about any of them. In a situation like that, the candidate who was the best organized would have the best chance of winning. What did I think?

5. I said there was a good deal of truth in that and that if he were a candidate, he would obviously have an advantage as regards organization. Even if, I said, there was no impropriety regarding General Loan's activities and even if there was no impropriety as regards the activities of the Ministry of Revolutionary Development, these agen-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Nodis. Received at 7:40 a.m.

² For a description of former Vice President Richard Nixon's brief mid-April private visit to Vietnam, see Richard Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grossett & Dunlap, 1978), pp. 282-283; and Stephen Ambrose, *Nixon: The Triumph of a Politician, 1962-1972* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989), pp. 110-112.

cies naturally have personnel spread all over the country and the mere fact that they know Ky and he is a flesh and blood figure to them could have great influence—probably more influence if all the proprieties were observed than otherwise. In general, I said, organization is decisive in an election which is very close. In such a situation, it can decide the issue.

6. *Comment:* I can still conceive, however, of Phan Khac Suu getting quite a big vote, not because anybody thinks he would make a particularly good President or because anybody thinks he is a really able executive, but because of what he symbolizes—the South, his conspiracies against the French and against Diem. *End comment.*

Lodge

135. Memorandum From the Special Assistant for
Counterinsurgency and Special Activities (DePuy) to the
Director of the Joint Staff (Goodpaster)¹

SACSA M 355 67

Washington, April 18, 1967.

SUBJECT

Preliminary Report on Revolutionary Development (U)

1. This is the first of what will be a series of reports by SACSA on The Revolutionary Development Program in RVN. These reports will be of three kinds:

- a. Weekly spot reports of significant RD matters.
- b. Monthly summaries, evaluations, and progress reports.
- c. Special reports on problem areas or subjects of high current interest including analysis and evaluation of selected aspects of the program.

2. *General Status*

a. In I Corps the RD program is clearly at a standstill and may be regressing. This is due to the diversion of USMC battalions to meet the Quang Tri and Thua Thien tactical threat by augmented NVA forces.

¹ Source: Department of Defense, Official Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 911/319 (18 Apr 67), IR 1090 67–13. Secret. Another copy is in the Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXXI, Memos (A).

b. In II Corps limited progress continues in the coastal areas of Binh Dinh, Phu Yen and Binh Thuan.

c. In III Corps limited progress continues in Binh Duong, Hau Nghia, Tay Ninh, Gia Dinh and Phouc Tuy. The redeployment of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade may bring progress in Tay Ninh to a standstill.

d. In IV Corps a general stalemate continues but will give way somewhat as US Forces make their impact.

e. The Hamlet Evaluation System is in the process of shaking down. It is not possible to tell at this point whether changes reflected in the February report are real changes on the ground or refinements in reporting. It will be May, June or July before much confidence may be placed on the new report.²

f. The diversion of 53 ARVN battalions to the support of RD has taken place and as of 1 March 24 of these battalions had completed RD training. The initial effectiveness of these battalions will be modest. Shortcomings in junior combat leadership at company, platoon and squad level will continue to inhibit a high level of effective small unit patrolling on which RD security so heavily depends.

g. The RD Team Program is encountering increasing problems of recruiting, casualties, desertions and quality. In Binh Dinh combined military civil teams have been formed to perform the cadre function because of a shortage of Vung Tau trained teams. General Westmoreland believes these teams may prove to be equally effective.

SECURITY

3. The central problem is, has been, and will continue to be security.³ In those areas where a high level of security has been provided,

² Approved for use in December 1966, the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) was implemented in order to achieve a unified reporting system for the progress of pacification. Based upon the evaluations of district advisers, each hamlet was classified into one of six lettered categories, depending upon the degree of government control in each village. The system went into effect in July 1967. See Richard A. Hunt, *Pacification: The American Struggle for Vietnam's Hearts and Minds* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), pp. 95–96.

³ As the United States increasingly emphasized the RD programs, the VC targeted the RD teams in the field. According to a May 4 AID memorandum from Vincent Puritano to Kenneth Vogel of the Vietnam Affairs Office, 120 attacks on RD teams occurred during March, and the trend appeared to be upward, with a projected annual range of attacks of 1,500 to 3,000, with a maximum of number of 5,450 casualties as a result. A proposed solution was the creation of mobile RD teams. (Center for Military History, Dep CORDS/MACV papers, folder 100: RD Cadres: 1967) In a memorandum to the President, April 5, Komer described the security provided by the ARVN to the RD teams as "less than adequate." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXIX)

the RD Program moves forward. Where the security situation is marginal or ambiguous, RD stands still, or regresses. Where security is not provided on a continuous basis, there is no RD.

a. The current concept in South Vietnam subscribed to both by South Vietnamese and US authorities in South Vietnam is to provide security for RD primarily with Vietnamese forces while US/Free World and certain other Vietnamese forces carry the fight to the VC/NVA outside the areas of RD emphasis. This is a desirable goal and all efforts should be continued to achieve it. However, it is a somewhat generalized view of the real-world problems on the ground in South Vietnam. It is necessary to go more deeply into the situation to evaluate its current status and prospects for success.

b. There are three groupings, or categories, of VC/NVA military forces which must be destroyed or neutralized if the war is to be won and the RD program is to go forward.

(1) The inter-provincial (or regional) main force VC or NVA divisions, regiments and separate battalions will hereafter be described simply as Main Forces. These forces move throughout the VC military regions on offensive/defensive or reenforcement operations as directed. There are additional NVA divisions which operate on or near the DMZ, Laotian and Cambodian borders and sanctuaries which could almost be called intervention forces in that they enter South Vietnam to fight but generally maintain their supply, training and rest areas behind the boundaries.

(2) There are intra-provincial forces—hereafter described as Provincial Forces consisting of one or more battalions and a number of district companies which move throughout a single province in much the same way as the regional forces move throughout groups of provinces. These provincial forces operate in conjunction with or in support of district village and hamlet guerrillas.

(3) Lastly, at the foot of the scale are the village and hamlet guerrilla forces themselves.

c. The VC/NVA High Command regards this echelonment of military forces as interdependent, in that lower echelons may call upon higher echelons for assistance. Although the MACV reporting system does not distinguish between search and destroy operations targetted against the main forces and the provincial forces, a quick statistical analysis of operations over the last 5 months reveals that:

40–50% of the US and Free World Forces operations in I Corps were against provincial forces—40% in II Corps—50% in III Corps—and in IV Corps, where no US/Free World forces were operating, about 70% of the Vietnamese operations were against VC provincial forces.

d. It is of no particular importance to a commander on the ground whether he is fighting a main force or a provincial VC battalion if they are in or on the fringes of a populated area, and this is undoubtedly why no reporting distinction has been made. However, it is perfectly

clear that progress in Revolutionary Development in large measure can be equated directly to the scope and pace of US/Free World Forces Operations against provincial VC forces contiguous to those areas in which Revolutionary Development activities are in progress. This is not a surprising phenomenon but it is an important one in assessing the prospects for RD progress and in calculating US/Free World Force requirements. The greatest RD progress up to November 1966 was made in Quang Nam Province where the III MAF mounted sustained offensive operations against VC provincial forces as well as main forces; in Binh Dinh Province where ROK Forces have done likewise; in Phu Yen because of operations of the 101st Airborne Brigade; in Binh Thuan Province because of the 1st Air Cavalry; in Binh Duong because of the 1st Division; in Hau Nghia Province because of the 25th Division and in Tay Ninh Province because of the sustained operations of the II Field Force combat elements.

e. In those provinces in which Vietnamese forces have had the responsibility for both the security of RD cadre and for sustained offensive operations against VC provincial forces, progress has been very modest or non-existent. In those provinces where US/Free World forces have diminished or discontinued offense operations against VC provincial forces because of participation in long-term offensive operations against the VC/NVA main forces in the war zones and along the borders, there has been a marked adverse impact on Revolutionary Development.

f. The constantly changing reporting system and the long lag time in receiving those reports in Washington does not make it possible at this time to support these statements with accurate up-to-date statistics. However, reports which are available clearly illustrate the general accuracy of these conclusions. As the hamlet evaluation system takes hold, it should be possible to provide the necessary statistics.

g. The key questions are how much the Vietnamese military forces can be expected to accomplish and how large must be the contribution to provincial security by US/Free World Forces. Experience over the past year indicates clearly that the US/Free World contribution has been and must continue to be very large. It also indicates that Vietnamese armed forces can not be expected to do much more than provide security for population and political centers—provide security for RD Cadre on a continuing basis—and contribute certain general reserve forces to offensive operations against main VC forces. The lion's share of offensive operations against the main forces will continue to be borne by US/Free World Forces. All forces (US/Free World and ARVN) will be involved in offensive operations against the provincial VC military elements; however, there will need to be a heavy (40% or more) and continuing US/Free World commitment to this effort.

h. Lastly, continued diversion of US/Free World Forces to the main force battle in the War Zones and along the border⁴ will inevitably result in bringing the RD program to a standstill unless they are replaced from out-of-country.

CIVILIAN PROGRAMS

4. Concerning the non-military programs with a direct bearing on RD progress, all of which are under the supervision of the Office of Civil Operations (OCO) some observations on the police, the RD workers and the mobilization of US civilian resources in support of RD are in order.

a. The National Police is programmed to reach a strength of 90,000 during 1967, 111,000 in 1968, and 150,000 by 1970. With a current strength of 63,000 and the competition for Vietnamese manpower possessing the skills and aptitudes required, it remains doubtful that the programmed strengths will be attained. The Police Field Forces are programmed to expand from a current strength of 6,464 to 15,000 during 1967 and to 50,000 by 1970. Here again the problem of recruiting and training make the programmed strengths appear overly ambitious. Thus far the PFF have not performed well.

b. An associated problem is the matter of forming a Vietnamese Constabulary which Mr. Komer has indicated he will address as one of his first projects in his new capacity. MACV and OCO hold opposing views on how the constabulary should be brought into being. Under the OCO concept the constabulary would be formed under a civil ministry of the GVN and built around a nucleus of the Police Field Forces. Expansion of the constabulary would be accomplished by the transfer of Regional Force Units to it. The USAID Public Safety Division of OCO would be responsible for providing the requisite advisory and assistance effort. It is the position of MACV that although the constabulary should be established under a GVN civil agency by governmental decree, it should be integrated in the defense establishment during a state of war or national emergency. The constabulary should be an elite force recruiting filler personnel from all uniformed services. MACV does not consider that OCO is the appropriate executive agency to be charged with the overall advisory and assistance effort, nor that the Police Field Forces are a proper nucleus in view of the past and present record of performance. MACV has completed a detailed study on this matter embodying the above concept and based upon research conducted on constabularies established by other developing nations

⁴ Reference is to Operations Junction City and Manhattan being conducted to clear the enemy from War Zone C.

in the past. Requisite advisory and assistance effort would be provided by MACV. The study is now under review by CINCPAC, and copies have been furnished OCO for study.

c. The Revolutionary Development cadre, or teams as they are now called, are programmed to expand to a total of 50,000 by the end of 1967. At the present time there are 33,114 carried on the rolls including 4,706 who are trainees at Vung Tau. Although the annual training output should permit attainment of the 50,000 man goal, there are trends which cumulatively will probably cause a short-fall. First, there is the increasing attrition as a result of Viet Cong activity. Thus far a total of 405 RD workers have been killed, wounded or are missing during the period 1 January–31 March 1967. The bulk of the losses occurred in March. In addition, there have been sizeable losses resulting from desertions and AWOL—471 were dropped from the rolls during the first two months of 1967 for this reason. Of special importance, as evidenced by the increasing VC orientation on elimination of the RD workers, is the need to provide improved security for RD. Ambassador Koren, the OCO regional representative in I Corps, in reporting on the situation in Thua Thien and Hue city, sums up the problem in this way: "At [the] present rate of VC activity [the] current level of forces in my opinion is not adequate to provide desired protection. Unless this is beefed up I am afraid [the] RD effort will be significantly set back from the very promising start this year".⁵ The expression of similar opinions may be anticipated in the future from areas uncovered by the redeployment of forces to meet NVA/VC Main Force threat in I CTZ.

d. On the US civil side there are personnel shortages in AID and CIA elements of the Office of Civil Operations (OCO) whose full time mission is the support of Revolutionary Development. OCO has developed a manning requirement for a total of 1,476 personnel for 1967. Currently 980 personnel are on hand. It can be expected that additional requests will be forthcoming for military personnel to fulfill the OCO requirement.

SUMMARY

5. The major immediate problem impacting on the progress of Revolutionary Development has been and will continue to be that of providing adequate security. The necessity to divert forces to counter the NVA/VC main forces will reduce the US/FWMAF and RVNAF capability to provide the effort required to destroy the VC provincial, district and village level forces and guerrillas. It is highly doubtful that

⁵ Brackets in the source text.

the ARVN forces committed to the direct support of RD can provide the level of security required to expand the program without the sustained presence of US/FW forces operating in contiguous areas. The major long range problem, assuming adequate security will be the quality, quantity and effectiveness of RD teams, public order and law enforcement (police and constabulary) and local administration. All of these programs will remain in varying forms of difficulty both physical and psychological as long as the security situation is marginal or unsatisfactory.

W.E. DePuy
Major General, USA

136. Memorandum Prepared by the Special Assistant for
Vietnamese Affairs, Central Intelligence Agency (Carver)¹

Washington, April 19, 1967.

SUBJECT

Nation in Ferment: National Elections and Political Permutations in South Vietnam

SUMMARY

The development of a much-needed political base for the Vietnamese government is slowly gaining momentum. The movement toward representative and effective governmental institutions has been complicated by divisive political and social influences and an absence of unifying traditions or institutions, as well as by intensified Communist political and military efforts. Having stabilized the situation, Vietnam's military leadership remains largely unified in its reluctance to relinquish its dominant position, but recognizes the need to share

¹ Source: Central Intelligence Agency, SAVA (Carver) Files, Job 80–B01712R, (SAVA) Jan.–June 1967. Secret. In a covering memorandum to the Director of Central Intelligence, Carver noted that the Office of National Estimates and the Far East Bureau contributed to the preparation of the memorandum. Although the memorandum was produced for the Saigon Station, Carver believed that it would be useful to distribute it to interested individuals and agencies. It was distributed as a “blind memorandum” with a Secret marking in order to “enhance its utility and avoid drawing attention to its CIA origin.”

power with civilian elements in order to gain the popular support needed to counter the disciplined Communist political threat.

Since its inception the Ky government has been consciously moving toward a transition to at least ostensible civilian rule along the Korean pattern. Because of their dominant position, the leaders of the military establishment have considerable assets to assist in accomplishing their aims, including funds, patronage, and the only non-Communist organization reaching down to the grass roots. To bolster their prospects, the military are attempting to form a loose political front composed of representatives of various religious and political groups which will sponsor GVN-endorsed candidates in the forthcoming elections.

If the military establishment can agree on a single slate and a single presidential candidate to support, none of the potential civilian candidates appears likely to develop the organization and broad spectrum of support necessary to seriously contest the military establishment's choice. This is particularly true if, as seems certain to be the case, the opposition to the military's choice is divided among two or more slates. Both the Suu and Huong tickets seem destined to split the important southern vote. None of the other candidates seems likely to muster more than nominal regional support.

Major issues in the elections are likely to stem largely from opposition to the concept of continued military control of the government. The opposition probably will focus on the related issues of corruption, inflation, and inefficiency of the military establishment, and may label Ky a U.S. puppet. The themes of peace and neutrality may also be espoused by the opposition, whose position would thus take on significant anti-American undertones. Despite this, it seems unlikely that the campaign will get too far off the track, although the possibility of flashes of violence cannot be ruled out completely. Other potential pitfalls include the danger that the military, unduly concerned over their prospects for victory, may attempt to repress the opposition or to rig the results. These also seem unlikely, and we expect the military, under Ky's leadership, to make a realistic endeavor to put the best possible face on its efforts to forge a genuine coalition with civilian elements.

On balance, the odds favor the election coming out reasonably well for both the GVN and the U.S., particularly if the U.S. provides active, discreet advice and counsel within the context of Vietnamese political realities. The military establishment appears almost certain to score a smashing electoral victory. The best hope is that, in doing so, it will facilitate the development of a broad political coalition comprising something approaching a majority of the electorate. Such a coalition could provide the basis for ultimate development of a genuine, cohesive, na-

tional party which would foster stability and provide a strong popular base for the GVN.

[Here follows the body of the memorandum comprising 18 pages of analysis.]

137. Telegram From the Embassy in the Soviet Union to the Department of State¹

Moscow, April 19, 1967, 1345Z.

4491. 1. Exchange of views with George Brown prompts following.² I suggest we should consider whether in present circumstances our continuing campaign of Vietnam peace moves really serves to further the possibility of peace negotiations. Apart from our basic objective of peace, I assume we wish to influence US and world opinion generally, and the Soviet Union, North Vietnam and the Vietcong in particular, the ChiComs being impervious to moves of this sort.

2. I am not able to judge effect of further moves on US public opinion but would have thought that any additional initiatives could add little to force of the long list of efforts we have made in recent months.

3. So far as Soviet Union is concerned I would not deny that our initiatives have had some favorable effect on Soviets despite coincidence in many cases with escalation of bombing of North Vietnam. In present circumstances, however, I believe that initiatives that Soviets know and know that we know have only a remote chance of success [and] may be positively harmful as adding to Soviet suspicions of our sincerity. This

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET S. Secret; Exdis. Received at 12:22 p.m.

² Brown's trip to the Soviet Union, scheduled for May, presented the United States with an opportunity to reopen the unsuccessful Sunflower channel. As a result of Wilson's request of March 16, the President met with British Ambassador Dean on April 10 to discuss the opportunities presented by Brown's visit. Wilson's request is in the Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Walt Rostow, Marigold–Sunflower. In an April 9 memorandum to Walt Rostow, Cooper suggested that the United States did in fact change the "tense" of the Phase A–Phase B formula during the Sunflower exercise due to a measurable increase in NVA infiltration southward. However, he emphasized that the change "was a matter of semantics, not of substance," with the only difficulty arising when Wilson "stretched out the formula." (Ibid., Country File, Vietnam, Sunflower, Vol. I) On April 14 Dean passed on Brown's response to an April 2 letter from the President regarding Soviet involvement in the Vietnam peace process. In the message Brown stressed that it was "essential to keep the Russians in play." Brown promised to put to Kosygin the idea of re-convening the Geneva conference if he saw a "propitious" moment to do so. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL UK–US)

is particularly true of our efforts to involve them. From my talk with Kosygin I would judge that he is aware that British are at least in part motivated by domestic political considerations and he is likely to question any British peace efforts. Soviets could of course bring some pressure on NVN by threatening to cut off supplies or by actually doing so. This would however risk throwing NVN into arms of ChiComs which would defeat one of primary Soviet objectives in this area. A more effective Soviet action could be to guarantee NVN against any Chinese takeover but Soviets unlikely take on any such commitment.

4. It is in respect of North Vietnam and the NLF however that our continued peace moves must surely be counter-productive. We have made it abundantly clear that at any time they are ready to move toward either settlement or de-escalation we will agree to almost any time, place or channel. While they may regard further initiatives on our part as merely a propaganda exercise, it seems more likely that we are giving them the impression of desperation and that this combined with demonstrations and speeches such as Fulbright's have convinced them that we will not stay the course. Until recently I believe Soviets had better judgment of our situation, but British Ambassador who has recently had occasion for many contacts with high Soviet officials suggested that reason for Dobrynin's return for consultation might be to get his views on whether we could carry on in Vietnam.³

5. Despite foregoing I do not believe escalation of bombing in North Vietnam is any answer either. In fact I believe that at least in the short run each step-up in bombing reduces the chances of the other side agreeing to negotiate. No government would want to enter negotiations directly connected with the increased use of force against it and North Vietnam has in addition the problem of Chinese pressure, their own brand of Communist pride, and the heavy investment they have made in this affair. They will surely not wish to jeopardize their post settlement position in South Vietnam by moving toward peace before the Vietcong are ready.

6. I suggest consideration be given to a Presidential statement listing all of our recent moves combined with a resolute declaration that while we will always be prepared to move to the conference table, since the other side seems determined upon achieving a military victory, we have no course open to us but to step up our operations in South Vietnam and to continue to use our bombers to hold down infiltration from the North. If we could persuade some of our critics to come out in sup-

³ The British Government was unaware of Johnson's April 5 letter to Ho (rejected by the North Vietnamese in Moscow; see Document 127) until April 21, when the British representative in Hanoi learned about it from the DRV. (Memorandum of conversation between Stewart and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Samuel Berger, April 26; *ibid.*, POL 15-1 US/JOHNSON)

port of our actions in view of the completely negative attitude of the other side, this would of course be most helpful.

7. If we could make some dramatic announcement such as a substantial increase in our forces in the South and combine it with an indication that we were leveling off our bombing in the North or even better confining it to the infiltration routes, we could make the outlook for the Vietcong very dark and at the same time reduce the risk of increased Soviet support of North Vietnam. Such a course might, it seems to me, reduce some of the criticism at home and thus the hope of North Vietnam that we will be forced by our own public opinion to withdraw.

8. It is against the foregoing background that I would suggest that rather than have George Brown continue to make peace noises when he comes to Moscow, he should convey to the Soviets a sense of our determination to see this affair through.

Thompson

138. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, April 20, 1967, 1015Z.

23584. 1. Pursuant to your 178636,² I called on Ky Thursday afternoon and cited the report which Lansdale had made to me about his conversation with Ky on Tuesday.³ I said I would like to know what

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Immediate; Exdis. Received at 7:53 a.m. and passed to the White House, DOD, and CIA at 8:07 a.m.

² In telegram 178636 to Saigon, April 19, the Department expressed continuing concern over Ky's "ill-advised ploy vis-à-vis Thieu." Because Thieu would not recognize a decision by those Generals already allied with Ky as a "military mandate" and refused to step aside for Ky, the Department instructed Lodge to emphasize with both men the "absolute necessity for their getting together to resolve this issue and to persuade their colleagues to abide by it." (Ibid.) Although the possibility existed that Ky and Thieu had concluded that "it would be unwise to force this any more than they have now," the Department believed that it might be necessary for the Ambassador in Saigon to intervene personally to pre-empt any trouble. (Telegram 177722 to Saigon, April 18; *ibid.*)

³ On April 18 Ky told Lansdale that the Generals asked Thang to inform Thieu, then recuperating in the hospital from an appendectomy, of their consensus. (Telegram 23389 from Saigon, April 18; *ibid.*) In a discussion with Lansdale on April 19, Thang stated that he had refused to undertake such an action. In fact, no one had gone to the hospital on this "errand." Lodge warned that the impact of a confrontation between Thieu and Ky could have "extremely dangerous" ramifications for the war effort. (Telegram 23488 from Saigon, April 20; *ibid.*)

actually had happened and said that, understandably, we in the U.S. Government would worry over even the slightest possibility that there would be any kind of an adversarial relationship between Ky and Thieu or between any two prominent Vietnamese military men.

2. Ky reflected for a fairly long moment and then said: "You don't have to worry. I personally will make any sacrifice to avoid a clash or division between us." I believe he means it.

3. He then gave me his account of the episode of Monday, April 17, as follows:

4. Members of the Directorate are worried: about military developments in I Corps and about preparations for the election. They see that Thieu is still—and Ky lapsed into French—"indecis." Meaning undecided and vacillating. They have heard a rumor that Thieu says he is ready to support Big Minh or civilian. They see the time going by with only four months till election day and consider that this is none too much.

5. So the members of the Directorate were nervous and they came to Ky on Monday. They recalled that the day before the Constitution was adopted, Ky had asked Thieu whether he was going to run or not. And Thieu had never said.

6. In Ky's own words: "The Generals said to me: You have more chance to win. You are more frank, and I (Ky) said to them: 'What can you do?' and so they said: 'We will ask Thang to go to Thieu and to explain the situation.' "

7. *Comment:* In other words, according to Ky, there was not an endorsement of Ky as the favorite of the military. It was an informal meeting of some (not all) Generals who were worried and concerned, and who wanted to explain the situation to Thieu and get an explanation out of him. *End comment.*

8. I said I was glad to hear his explanation and to realize that this was not an "ill advised ploy" (to use the phrase in 178636) regarding Thieu. I stressed the fact that if there was not a broad consensus among the military leadership, all the political progress that had been made would be jeopardized. The importance of the Generals being together was something which President Johnson had stressed in a very moving and persuasive way at Guam. To this Ky agreed.

9. I then said that there were plenty of honors to go around, that when men rise as high in the field of government as Ky and Thieu that it isn't a question of one being in and the other being out. If, for example, Thieu were to be President, then it would be quite understandable for Ky to have a very prominent Cabinet office—or whatever he wanted.

10. One thing was certain, I said, and that was that if there was a clash and if it became evident that individual political figures in Viet-

Nam could not submerge their personal ambitions for the greater good of the nation, there would be some very long and very deep thoughts in Washington as to the capacity of Viet-Nam for self-government.

11. I then said I shared the concern of those who felt that this matter ought to be cleared up. I believed it had been dragging along to a point where further delay could be actually harmful. I told Ky that I planned to tell General Thieu that, while we obviously were not taking sides, the matter of who the military favored for President should be settled, that further temporizing was harmful and that to settle this question would clear the air. It seemed to me that one way to do it was in conversation between Thieu and Ky, either alone at first or with the other Generals all in the same room. It was a time to be frank and no one needed to lose face. (*Comment: Ky had stressed to me how strongly he felt he did not want General Thieu to lose face. End comment.*)

12. Ky then said he wanted to say something to me confidentially in the light of our close relationship, which was that when [garble—Ky?] on the day the Armed Forces Council met to ratify the Constitution, had said he would support Thieu if Thieu decided to accept, that at that time the Generals would have accepted Ky's word and would have supported Thieu. But now, he said, Thieu's hesitation has created a problem. They have lost confidence in him.

13. I asked what would they do if Thieu was the candidate and Ky was not. Would they support a civilian? Ky said he didn't know.

14. *Comment:* I intend to see Thieu and tell him that we think the question of the "military candidate" should be settled.⁴

Lodge

⁴ Lodge saw Thieu on April 21. During the meeting Lodge informed him that although the U.S. Government would not intervene to decide who should be the military candidate, it was "concerned by the unsettling effect of this prolonged uncertainty" over the issue. Thieu replied that he previously had told the members of the Directorate that he would "be available" as a candidate if they gave him their support on a personal basis. He expected to announce his candidacy by May 1. He also asked Lodge to inform Johnson that the Generals would not fight over the matter. "We now have absolutely categorical assurances from Thieu and Ky that they are not going to have clash," Lodge reported. (Telegram 23667 from Saigon, April 21; *ibid.*) In an April 21 covering memorandum transmitting a copy of telegram 23667 to the President, Rostow observed that Thieu apparently had the "Presidential bug." He believed, however, that Thieu and Ky would "work it out." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Nodis Vol. V (A)) The Department remained concerned, however, that a leadership struggle would erupt after Lodge's departure and before Bunker's arrival in Saigon as the new Ambassador. In telegram 180382 to Kathmandu, Saigon, and New Delhi, April 21 (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 17 US–VIET S) and in telegram 180656 to Kathmandu, April 22, the Department advised Bunker to report to Saigon immediately after Lodge's departure. (*Ibid.*, POL 15–1 VIET S) Bunker was in Nepal visiting his wife, Ambassador Carol Laise.

139. Editorial Note

On April 20, 1967, U.S. planes attacked targets in the previously restricted area of Haiphong. The objective of the strikes was to destroy two additional thermal power plants which generated electricity used by key military installations in the Hanoi–Haiphong area. However, the administration was quick to point out that the new round of bombings was not an expansion of the war. (Telegram 178696 to London, Tokyo, Manila, Seoul, Canberra, Wellington, and Bangkok, April 20; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S) These strikes had been postponed twice during the President's absence from Washington: first, April 10–14, when he was attending the Organization of American States conference in Punta del Este, Uruguay, and second, April 14–18, when he was vacationing at the LBJ Ranch in Texas. In telegram 175129 to Secretary Rusk, Tosec 137, April 14, William Bundy and Nicholas Katzenbach unsuccessfully argued that the attacks should be further delayed as such military action would make the upcoming SEATO meeting and a conference of the troop-contributing nations appear to be "war councils." They also believed that the strikes would push the British still further toward a less supportive position on Vietnam. (Ibid.)

Expanded strikes against North Vietnamese military targets quickly followed the attack on the power plants. These bombings, approved by the President on April 22, began on April 24 as the RT 55 strikes during which two key enemy airfields (at Hoa Lac and Kep) were attacked for the first time in order to reduce the enemy's air defense capability. See Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960–1968*, Part III, pages 41-5–41-8.

140. Memorandum of Conversation¹

Washington, April 20, 1967.

SUBJECT

U.S. April 19 Proposal Affecting the DMZ in Vietnam

¹ Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Harriman Papers, Special Files, Public Service, General File, April 1967. Secret. Drafted by Roy on April 21. The conversation is also reported in telegram 179762 to Moscow, April 21. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, EA/ACA Files: Lot 69 D 277, Vietnam File–Soviet, Communist Positions & Initiatives, 1967)

PARTICIPANTS

Mr. Yuri N. Chernyakov, Chargé d'Affaires of the Soviet Embassy

W. Averell Harriman, Ambassador at Large

Chester L. Cooper, Special Assistant

J. Stapleton Roy, Office of Soviet Union Affairs

The Soviet Chargé d'Affaires, Mr. Chernyakov, came in at Governor Harriman's request. Governor Harriman said he wished formally to call to the attention of the Soviet Government the U.S. reaction to the Canadian four-point proposal on Vietnam of April 11. He gave Mr. Chernyakov a copy of the April 19 Department statement concerning mutual troop withdrawals from the demilitarized zone in Vietnam and noted that this was a very serious proposal which could lead to further discussions concerning an overall settlement.² We had called our views to the attention of the British and we wished also to inform the Soviets in their capacity as one of the Co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference.³

Governor Harriman then explained in some detail the relationship between the present U.S. proposal and the Canadian four-point proposal. He noted that the Canadian proposal, which we accepted, had stimulated our own. The U.S. proposal, however, goes further in several important respects, in that it specifically provides not only for mutual troop withdrawals from the 26 mile wide zone but also for further discussions.

Chernyakov asked how he should understand the fact that the U.S. statement made no mention of bombing. Would the bombing of North Vietnam be continued?

Governor Harriman pointed out that the U.S. proposal was not related to our overall bombing policy. It only affected bombing insofar as the 26 mile wide zone was concerned. It would not affect military action elsewhere.

Chernyakov stated he would convey the U.S. proposal to his government. He noted, however, that he had read in the press that the

² Since the DRV rejected Martin's overture on April 16, the Johnson administration issued on April 19 a proposal specifying an extension of the DMZ by 10 miles on either side, a concomitant mutual pull-back from the DMZ, and an ICC inspection of both sides of the DMZ. With the enactment of this arrangement, peace talks could begin, which "could be public or private and take place at any appropriate level and site that the Government of the DRV might suggest." For its full text, see Department of State *Bulletin*, May 15, 1967, p. 750. Two days later the DRV rejected the U.S. initiative on the grounds that it represented a permanent division of Vietnam and did not include its principal demand for the termination of U.S. bombing in North Vietnam. On April 23 the NLF also rejected the U.S. proposal. For these statements, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1967, pp. 917–918 and 920–921.

³ Britain and the Soviet Union were Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference of 1954, the stipulations of which continued to apply in the case of Vietnam.

North Vietnamese had rejected the Canadian proposal, Hanoi's position being that the aggressors and the victims of aggression could not be equated.

Governor Harriman said we did not consider the article in the North Vietnamese press rejecting the Canadian proposal an official statement. We still hoped Hanoi would give serious consideration to our proposal, which gave hope that discussions could take place leading to a settlement. Our proposal was carefully drafted so as not to embarrass Hanoi. It deliberately made no mention of North Vietnamese troops in the South in recognition of DRV sensitivities. It calls only for withdrawals from the demilitarized zone. We felt the Canadian proposal required a response on our part. This proposal was an indication of our good faith. This was what we were telling the British, and we hoped the Soviets likewise would do their best to get Hanoi to consider the proposal seriously.⁴

Chernyakov noted that at the same time that we were making this proposal, he had read in the press that we were considering bombing North Vietnam's cement plants in the vicinity of Haiphong and had bombed the power plants. Should the USSR expect further bombing in conjunction with our proposal?

Governor Harriman said he did not intend to discuss military operations. The President had made his position clear that the bombing would continue in the absence of reciprocal action by Hanoi. Our bombing policy was not changed.

If Hanoi's position was clear, so was the President's. (Governor Harriman again emphasized this point later in the conversation to insure that there was no misunderstanding on Chernyakov's part of the firmness of the President's position on bombing.)

Chernyakov commented that our proposal did not seem to take into account the North Vietnamese position revealed last March (i.e., by Hanoi's release of the Ho–Johnson exchange of letters.)⁵

Chernyakov then raised the point that each time the U.S. Government made an approach to the Soviets here, there was a leak to the

⁴ Other world leaders were interested in the Canadian proposal. The Pope and President Johnson exchanged notes over it on May 3. (Telegrams 187214 and 187280 to Rome, May 3; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET) The President and Canadian Prime Minister Pearson discussed the cease-fire proposal at their meeting on May 25. In response to Pearson's query as to the chances of success for such a proposal, Johnson replied that he "thought the proposal had about as much appeal as a proposal to become a Yankee would have had to his Confederate grandmother." (Memorandum of conversation, May 25; Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Canada, Vol. I)

⁵ See Document 82. This exchange was made public by the North Vietnamese on March 21; see *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1967*, Book I, pp. 390–391.

press within a few days. The most recent example resulted from the Heck–Vorontsov conversation concerning the Indo-Pak arms embargo. The Embassy had conveyed this information to Moscow, but we subsequently told correspondents that we had informed the Soviets in advance. He referred specifically to a statement by the Department's spokesman on April 13 which stated: "... we did inform the CENTO and SEATO countries and the USSR and they indicated some appreciation for that information." Chernyakov objected particularly to the implication that the Soviets were also "appreciative". Dobrynin had met with the Secretary on an earlier occasion, and a story a few days later by Murray Marder stated that the Soviets had been told in advance of our intention to increase our bombing of the North. Chernyakov said this created difficulties for the Embassy.

Governor Harriman stated that if he were asked by the press about the present meeting he would simply say we had drawn the U.S. proposal to the attention of the USSR as a Geneva Conference Co-chairman.

In response to Governor Harriman's question, Chernyakov said that Ambassador Dobrynin was officially expected back in the next few days but he suspected that the Ambassador might find occasion to stay a bit longer in Moscow since his family was there and the May Day celebrations were approaching. He noted that he was holding the No. 2 position in the Embassy on a temporary basis, since he had not yet been officially confirmed as Zinchuk's replacement.

141. Editorial Note

The Joint Chiefs of Staff sent their views on the augmentation of U.S. military forces in Vietnam to Secretary of Defense McNamara in a memorandum dated April 20, 1967. In it the Joint Chiefs requested for the upcoming fiscal year a "minimum essential force" of two and one-third divisions, five tactical fighter squadrons, and additional naval and riverine forces for South Vietnam, as well as additional allotments of troops to man the strong-point obstacle system being designed in Quang Tri Province and aircraft to be stationed in Thailand. The JCS also noted that another dispatch of forces equal in size to this request "may be required" to achieve a "satisfactory conclusion to the war." Such numbers of troops were necessary "to retain the initiative and maintain momentum in the conflict." A call-up of the military reserve and Congressional action would be required in order to deploy these numbers of personnel. (Johnson Library, Papers of Paul C.

Warnke, John McNaughton Files, McNTN XIV, Misc. 1967 (3)) In a May 1 memorandum to Secretary McNamara, General Maxwell Taylor supported the JCS call for the additional troops by late 1968. "I am aware that this schedule cannot be met without a call-up of reservists and an involuntary extension of terms of service but do not view this fact as an overwhelming objection," Taylor noted. "This threshold of decision in all probability must be crossed some time and the present timing on the heels of General Westmoreland's visit is a good one and should provide a convincing testimonial of our determination to see this thing through to a finish." (Ibid., National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXXII)

142. Editorial Note

The United States and its allies sought to demonstrate their determination to continue the war effort in Vietnam at three international conferences in late April 1967. The Council of Ministers of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) met at Washington April 18–20. In his opening address to the Foreign Ministers, Secretary of State Rusk declared that a show of the resolve of the SEATO member nations to keep South Vietnam non-Communist would bring about victory. "Eventually Hanoi must come to realize that it will not be permitted to conquer South Viet-Nam by force." For the full text of his statement, see Department of State *Bulletin*, May 15, 1967, pages 742–744. According to the text of the final communiqué of the meeting, April 20, the SEATO member states "reaffirmed their determination to maintain, and where possible to increase, their efforts in support of Vietnam in accordance with their respective constitutional processes." See *ibid.*, pages 745–747. Documentation on the SEATO meeting is printed in *Foreign Relations*, 1964–1968, volume XXVII.

Directly following the SEATO Ministerial meeting, a summit of the seven allied troop-contributing nations met April 20–21 in Washington to discuss Vietnam. Background material on the conference is in the National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, EA/ACA Files: Lot 69 D 277, Vietnam File–GVN. A summary of the conference was sent to the Embassies of each participating nation in telegram 180681, April 22. (Ibid., Vietnam File–US) According to the summary, the primary topic of discussion was the mechanism for achieving a peaceful settlement in Vietnam. Rusk told the delegates that "all efforts to bring Hanoi to the conference table had received only short and contemptuous rejections; we cannot stop our half of the war and permit Hanoi to

continue its half." His conclusion was that despite the fact that the "outlook for peace now is not encouraging," the military pressure on North Vietnam and the support for South Vietnam had to continue. The representatives also lauded the progress that the South Vietnamese Government was making in terms of political development and the civil struggle against the Communist insurgents. (Ibid.) Records of this conference are *ibid.*, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET. A communiqué released at the conclusion of the conference noted that the participants had "reaffirmed their resolve to continue their military and all other efforts, as firmly and as long as may be necessary, in close consultation among themselves until the aggression is ended." For text of the communiqué, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1967, pages 918–920.

A final meeting, that of the ANZUS (Australia-New Zealand-U.S. Security Pact) Council, was held April 21–22. The participants "reaffirmed their hope that North Viet-Nam, realizing the determination of the people of South Viet-Nam and their allies, would reverse its intransigent stand and manifest a willingness to bring the conflict to an end on fair and reasonable terms." For full text of this communiqué released on April 22, see *ibid.*, pages 731–732.

143. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam¹

Washington, April 21, 1967, 1 a.m.

179529. From the President for Lodge.

1. As you prepare to pay your final calls, I have been mulling over your recent cables. Two problems stand out in my mind.

2. The first one is the absolutely crucial problem of ensuring that the Vietnamese military stay united among themselves in this critical

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Immediate; Nodis. Drafted and approved by Rusk and cleared by Read. On April 18 Komer submitted the text of the cable through Rostow to the President. In a covering memorandum of April 18, Rostow told Johnson that he and Komer concurred in the transmission of the cable, which "might be helpful" to Lodge. "It fits his thought and ours; but he is only likely to be forceful if he receives guidance from you," he noted. The President approved Rostow's recommendation to "check it out" with Rusk and McNamara. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXIX, Cables) According to an attached note of April 19, McNamara telephoned approval. (Ibid.)

pre-election period and that they loyally support the elected government which emerges. I personally emphasized this to Do and Bui Diem yesterday.

3. Thieu and Ky should understand that we cannot decide for them who should be the military candidate, and that we cannot force the military to rally behind that candidate. This is their job and they must face up to it. Please tell Thieu and Ky that each has said publicly that he would not oppose the other; we have accepted their statements at face value because we know they both are patriots. This is a critical period in which they and their colleagues must subordinate personal feelings and ambitions to the national interest. They must support the political process now in train and ensure that it does not fail. Disruption of military unity now, or failure of the military to support the proper conduct of the elections and to rally behind the elected government, would be disastrous for South Viet-Nam, for the support of the American public behind our effort in Viet-Nam, and for international support generally. This must not happen.

4. I know that you have been seeing Ky with good effect and are likely to see Thieu on this very issue. I of course leave to you how to get this message across, but as you prepare to leave there should be no doubt in Ky's or Thieu's minds of the depth of our feeling on this score. FYI. We continue to be concerned about what they may try to do if your departure creates a gap before Bunker's arrival. We are exploring this with Bunker. Since we are in a war situation, general protocol practice about avoiding an overlap between ambassadors need not apply. This is not an indication of any lack of confidence in Porter but a concern lest someone in Saigon decides to play tricks between you and Bunker. End FYI.

5. The second problem of critical importance is the revamping and remotivating of the Vietnamese armed forces for the vital task of pacification. This is covered in a separate message.²

Rusk

² This issue was discussed in telegram 179530 to Saigon, April 21. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S)

144. Memorandum From William Jorden of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Special Assistant (Rostow)¹

Washington, April 21, 1967.

SUBJECT

Message to Ky

Ambassador Diem has just talked personally with General Ky.

The Prime Minister sends his deep respect and warm greetings to the President.

He understands fully the President's message and the concern reflected therein.²

He is deeply aware of the problems raised. He is putting the stability and the unity of the armed forces above *everything*. Nothing must be permitted to shatter the unity of the ARVN.

A majority of the generals would like him to be the Presidential candidate. He is considering this. If he can be the candidate *without* causing a break in armed forces stability, he will do it. But if his being a candidate will break the unity of the Army, he will not do it.

Nothing must be permitted to happen to the unity of the army and this is the uppermost consideration in his mind.

Regarding the I Corps situation, he realizes that the picture has been created that the Americans are rushing in to fight, but nothing is said of the Vietnamese forces. He recognizes this can be a source of criticism for the President, and for him and his people.

ARVN units have been moved into areas now being vacated by those U.S. forces moving north to I Corps. He will try to do more. It is a problem for us both.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXIX, Cables. Secret. In a covering memorandum to the President, April 21, Bromley Smith wrote: "In response to your oral message, Premier Ky asked his Ambassador to reassure you he will not break the unity of the Vietnamese military. Attached is Bill Jorden's report of his conversation with Ambassador Diem who had talked to Ky." (Ibid.) The notation "L" on the memorandum indicates that the President saw it.

² On April 19 immediately following a White House reception for SEATO Ministers, President Johnson met with Diem and Tran Van Do. He requested that they transmit to Ky a two-part message. First, Johnson cited the "absolute necessity" of continued cohesion among the Vietnamese leadership. Second, he stressed the need for the RVNAF "to carry as much of the military load as possible." That evening, Diem told Jorden that he had sent the message both to Ky and to an associate of his who worked in the Prime Minister's office. He assured Jorden that Ky and Thieu would "not let things get out of hand." (Memorandum from Jorden to Rostow, April 20; *ibid.*) In a conversation with Unger later that day, Diem confirmed that he had delivered Johnson's message to Ky. (*Ibid.*)

At the end, he repeated his deep respect for President Johnson. He recalled the pledge he made at Guam and he will live up to it. Nothing can happen to the unity of the Vietnamese armed forces; it must not be permitted.

Bill

145. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, April 22, 1967, 0900Z.

23740. Ref: State 178636.²

1. The relative standings of Thieu and Ky within the military are not clear. They also appear to be subject to somewhat unpredictable change. The majority of the members of the Armed Forces Council seem to be carefully maintaining positions which will enable them to move in behind either Ky or Thieu when they judge the time is ripe and the outcome reasonably certain. This wait-and-see attitude is demonstrated by the apparent unwillingness of the Armed Forces Council to be committed. Neither do the military members of the Directorate wish to give the equivalent of a political endorsement, although they will eventually, though indirectly, probably take a position. The top officers do not want the lines clearly drawn because they want to avoid being divided into two opposing camps and because it seems inappropriate to act like a political nominating convention. They may be reluctant to make a choice which, if they guess wrong, could mortgage their futures or even end their military careers.

2. Even in the case of those senior officers who are pretty well identified as favoring Ky or Thieu, it would not be correct to say that at this time more than one or two are fully committed. General Cao Van Vien, for example, is believed to support Ky, but he probably still has a line out to Thieu and could switch to Thieu's camp if it seemed wise.

3. There are those who say that Ky seems to have a better standing than Thieu. Ky's probable supporters are said to include the Air Force and General Khang, Loan, Thang, Lam, Cao Van Vien, and Linh

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Priority; Exdis. Received at 5:29 a.m. and passed to the White House, DOD, and CIA at 6:20 a.m.

² See footnote 2, Document 138.

Quang Vien. Through the Air Force and Generals Khang and Loan, Ky can muster most if not all of the effective armed force in the Saigon area. This makes an armed coup against Ky rather unlikely and suggests that Thieu would have to reply on political maneuver.

4. The above does not take into consideration the possibility of a palace coup or some variant thereof. This possibility appears remote. Ky has assured me that this will not be done to Thieu and Thieu has given me comparable assurance.

5. Vietnamese politicians both in and out of the army are keenly conscious of our position and constantly seek to know our views on important questions. This is certainly true in the present case. It is possible that some individuals or factions might feel there was less chance of effective interference from us if they moved during the brief interim between my departure and Ambassador Bunker's arrival. I think however that this would be only one of many considerations in their minds, and not a ruling one at that. As I indicated in an earlier message, such a move does not seem likely.

6. I believe there is a real advantage in the American Ambassador here at this time not knowing the possible candidates well. Vietnamese observers will more readily believe that the U.S. is impartial than would be the case if I were here. No matter how impartially I acted in fact there would be impressions caused by the well known friendships which I have made over the years.

Lodge

146. Telegram From Bromley Smith of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Special Assistant (Rostow)¹

Washington, April 24, 1967, 2300Z.

CAP 67332. Subject: Lodge's farewell call on Ky. Saigon 23825.²

1. I paid my farewell call on Ky, telling him how much it had meant to me to work with him during the past period of almost two years. I congratulated him on his capacity to grow and to learn new

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LX-IV, Cables. Secret; Exdis. Repeated to Rusk who, along with Rostow, accompanied the President on his visit to Germany April 23–26. (Ibid, President's Daily Diary)

² Dated April 24. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 15–1 VIET S) The text of telegram 23825 is repeated in this telegram.

subjects; on his courage to do the things that needed to be done; and, above all, on his capacity to control himself so as not to get impatient, not to be impulsive, and not to be revengeful. I had observed during my life so many brilliant men who had nonetheless destroyed their careers by impatience, impulsiveness, and revengefulness. I said that I expected to be in Washington in the future and hoped that he would call on me if I could be of any use and, of course, that Bui Diem could always get in touch with me quickly.

2. He thanked me and said he thought "his most important role in the future was to build unity and stability." The Viet Cong, he said, "worry about Vietnamese progress in politics." He intends to place "maximum emphasis" on this problem which has such vital importance to Vietnam's place on the "international scene."

3. He said he had noted that the Vietnamese dislike a man who is holding office, but that a man who is out of office and acting unselfishly for the good of the country without possibility of self-seeking is popular. He saw a role for himself above the battle.

4. We discussed the forthcoming election and he agreed that if the Constitution was carried out, and if all the leading Vietnamese supported the new President, Senate, and Assembly, that the Vietnamese position in international affairs would be totally different. Hanoi would inescapably realize—whether they admitted it or not—that talk of a so-called coalition government was no longer in the cards.

5. If, he said, Hanoi were then to ask for neutrality, that would be no problem because a state of affairs in which Vietnam was neutral in fact as well as in name would be satisfactory.

6. He said he had had a telephone call from Bui Diem reflecting a conversation with the highest sources in Washington, and he had told Bui Diem not to worry. Lodge.

147. Memorandum by the President's Special Assistant (Komer)¹

Washington, April 24, 1967.

SUBJECT

Thoughts on Future Strategy in Vietnam

As I depart Washington for Saigon, I want to leave behind my own views on future conduct of the war. The story of our involvement in Vietnam is one of increasing commitment of US resources as we found the GVN (despite our help) increasingly incapable of meeting a growing threat. Without faulting this process, it also reflects a tendency to resort in our frustration *to actions which we can control* (e.g., bombing operations, US ground force operations) in lieu of the much tougher, slower, and less certain measures required to make the Vietnamese pull their weight.

I believe that we should re-examine this trade-off. With COMUSMACV asking for a major troop increase, with the bombing offensive widening—each with a series of corollary implications of potentially major magnitude (e.g. reserve call-up), we need to examine any alternative course of action which could optimize the chances of a satisfactory Vietnam outcome without such an extensive further step-up in the US share of the war. I believe that there is a series of measures which could get enough more out of our Vietnamese allies. Some are measures which we have previously rejected, but on grounds which look a great deal less compelling now when matched against the potential alternative. My reasoning follows:

I. *What Are the Critical Variables Which Will Determine Success in Vietnam?* I will state my case in bare outline, with emphasis on the next critical 18 months:

A. *It is Unlikely that Hanoi will Negotiate.* We can't count on a negotiated compromise. Perhaps the NLF would prove more flexible, but it seems increasingly under the thumb of Hanoi.

B. *More Bombing or Mining Would Raise the Pain Level but Probably Wouldn't Force Hanoi to Cry Uncle.* I'm no expert on this, but can't see it as decisive. Could it prevent Hanoi from maintaining substantial in-

¹ Source: Center for Military History, DepCORDS/MACV Files, Pacification Concepts: 1967–68. Secret; Eyes Only. This memorandum was sent first to Katzenbach, and then to McNamara and Vance. In a transmittal memorandum to the latter two, April 24, Komer argued that the memorandum “deserves careful study” and noted that it was “done in haste and deliberately designed to plead an alternative case.” (Ibid.)

filtration if it chose? Moreover, some facets of it contain dangerous risks.

C. *Thus the Critical Variable is in the South!* The greatest opportunity for decisive gains in the next 12–18 months lies in accelerating the erosion of the VC in South Vietnam, and in building a viable alternative with attractive power. Let's assume that the NVA could replace its losses, *I doubt that the VC could*. They are now the "weak sisters" of the enemy team. The evidence is not conclusive, but certainly points in this direction. Indeed, the NVA strategy in I Corps seems designed to take pressure off the VC in the South.

II. *How Do we Maximize the Chances of a "Breakthrough" in the South?* Therefore, if we could maximize the pressures of all kinds on the VC—direct and indirect—political, economic, psychological and military—we might at the optimum force Hanoi to fade away, or at the minimum achieve such success as to make clear to all that the war was being won. Such a course would also reinforce the pressures on Hanoi to negotiate. But if we can't get a settlement in 12–18 months, at the least we should shoot for such concrete results in South Vietnam that it might permit us to start bringing a few troops home rather than sending ever more out.

I confess here to a strong bias that we are already winning the war in the South. No one who compares the situation today to that of April 1966 (much less April 1965) can deny we're doing better. But many contend we've just stopped losing, not started winning. Much depends on one's confidence in our O/B estimates, which I for one question—especially with regard to VC recruiting rates and losses in the South. Much also depends on how much weight one gives to political trends, changing popular attitudes, etc. But I won't argue the case here—time will tell who's right. In any case, we're not drawing ahead clearly enough or fast enough to optimize our confidence in achieving a 12–18 month turnaround. So what more needs to be done?

A. *How Much Would We Achieve from a Major New US Force Commitment?* COMUSMACV is asking for 210,000 men no later than June 1968 and roughly 100,000 as soon as possible (on top of the 475,000 plus 60,000 ROK's, Aussies, etc. already programmed). However, MACV's justification for these added forces needs further review. To what extent are they based on inflated O/B estimates of enemy strength? If enemy main force strength is now levelling off because of high kill ratios, etc., would the added US forces be used for pacification? General DePuy estimates that 50% of US/ROK maneuver battalions are already supporting RD by dealing with the "middle war", the VC main force provincial battalions. How good are US forces at pacification-related tasks, as compared to RVNAF? What are the trade-offs? A major US force commitment to pacification also basically changes the nature of our presence in Vietnam and might force us to stay in-

definitely in strength. Whether or not the added US forces would become heavily involved in pacification, however, another major US force increase raises so many other issues that we must ask whether this trip is really necessary.

B. *What package of alternative measures designed to get the GVN to pull more weight—militarily, politically, economically—might reduce or obviate the need for a major US force increase?* I believe that an urgent across-the-board attack on this problem offers sufficient promise to deserve analysis. Many measures, previously rejected because the cons seemed to outweigh the pros in each individual case, should be re-examined in the light of the new range of trade-offs involved. To me, some of their disadvantages look pretty pale compared to the potential costs of another 200,000 US troops and/or sharply stepped-up bombing of the North.

Moreover, we have been more permissive in dealing with recognized deficiencies of RVNAF and the GVN than we can afford to be any longer, given the alternatives involved. We must use every sensible means of persuasion, or if necessary pressures which we have shied from using in the past. The following is just an outline of the package which should be considered.

1. *First is an all-out effort to get more for our money out of RVNAF.* We have trained and equipped over 650,000 (and for so little cost that it is a good investment in any case). But can't we greatly increase the return?

(a) *Insist on jacking up RVNAF leadership at all levels.* All observers agree that this is RVNAF's most critical weakness. A massive attack on it could pay real short-run dividends. Insist on dismissal of incompetent commanders. Find US means for rewarding competent ones, such as withholding MAP from ineffective units.

(b) *Insist on a Joint Command.* Putting at least ARVN under Westy and his corps commanders might be the best short-run way to get more response out of ARVN. If it would ease the GVN problem, the contingents of the other five contributors could be added. Whatever the problems entailed, they seem small to me compared to sending another 200,000 men.

(c) *Greatly Expand the US Advisory Structure, Especially with RF/PF.* Here's another quick way to get more for our money. In some cases the troop to advisor ratio in RF/PF is 1,000 to 1. Only 1,200 advisors (the strength of one USMC maneuver battalion) might have many times the payoff.

(d) *Expand RVNAF as a substitute for more US forces.* Westy wants 50,000 more RF/PF in FY 1968. Let's consider 100,000 in a two-phase expansion.

(e) *Increase RVNAF pay, housing, ration, and other incentives.* Bull through a better promotion policy. The savings from cutting back on non-productive units and expenditures might finance much of the increase.

(f) *Enrich RVNAF equipment.* I'm told the rifles and carbines are poor, that more radios for RF/PF would help greatly, that new equipment would build up morale and effectiveness.

A crash program along the above lines would be cheap at the price, in fact so cheap that we probably ought to do most of it anyway. Piaster and manpower constraints are manageable in my view.

2. *Expand civilian pacification programs along similar lines:*

(a) We're turning out RD teams about as fast as feasible. So supplement them with "instant RD teams" on model of civil/military team in Binh Dinh.

(b) Even 44 more US advisors for RD teams would make a big supervisory difference. Ditto for 50 more US advisors for the police.

(c) Give RD teams and police all the equipment they need—from military stocks.

(d) Integrate the US advisory effort on pacification to provide a new forward thrust.

(e) Press harder for removal of incompetent or corrupt province and district officials.

3. *Revamp and put new steam behind a coordinated US/GVN intelligence collation and action effort targeted on the VC infrastructure at the critical provincial, district, and village levels.* We are just not getting enough payoff yet from the massive intelligence we are increasingly collecting. Police/military coordination is sadly lacking both in collection and in swift reaction.

4. *Press much harder on radical land reform initiatives* designed to consolidate rural support behind the GVN.

5. *Step up refugee programs deliberately aimed at depriving the VC of a recruiting base.*

6. *Last but not least, use our influence discreetly to maximize the chances of smooth transition to an effective, popularly-based GVN.* This is central to the proposition that we can get the Vietnamese to pull their weight. When we look at the alternative cost of taking over even more of Vietnam's war, political intervention looks less frightening. Can we afford more coups, or crises in Saigon which in my view could undermine our whole position regardless of how many troops we send?

III. *Conclusions.* Many more actions—large and small—could be added to the above illustrative list. My argument is simply that some such package of measures—carried through with real determination—may offer just as much prospect of accelerating the favorable trends in SVN over the next 12–18 months as major new US military commitments—and could obviate much of the need for the latter. And they would be a lot less costly to us.

The above package could be combined with other US unilateral measures—let's say a minor force increase to 500,000, accelerated emphasis on a barrier, and some increased bombing—to further optimize

its prospects. Granted that my underlying premise is that we're already doing well enough in SVN—the critical area—to see light at the end of the tunnel. But my basic point is that this added package at least offers sufficient promise to deserve urgent review.

R. W. Komer²

² Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

148. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam¹

Washington, April 26, 1967, 8:10 p.m.

183049. Ref: Saigon 23967.²

1. Reftel and collateral evidence in FVS 14,196 and FVS 14,920³ indicates that run-off election is becoming key election issue. We continue to believe strongly that successful presidential candidate must obtain either majority or substantial plurality of vote (we question whether 35% is substantial enough plurality). President, as leader of nation, should benefit from prestige which sizeable percentage of popular vote accords him and thus be in better political and psychological position to conduct both his internal programs and his nation's foreign relations. In Viet-Nam, where body politic has long suffered from sharply divisive factors and where future Government will have to deal with well-disciplined and tightly organized communist group, this factor becomes even more significant. Moreover, international image of minority President, particularly if he is military man, is likely to be most unfavorable.

2. On other hand, electoral law provisions on this issue could have considerable impact on outcome of elections, as you note para 3 ref-tel,⁴ and we tend to accept judgment of those Deputies who believe

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Priority; Exdis. Approved by Unger.

² In telegram 23967, April 25, the Embassy reported on a "major battle" in the Constituent Assembly over the run-off provision in the Presidential election law. The minority group that favored the provision managed to gain temporary acceptance of the provision (but only if no candidate received more than 35 percent of the vote). The Directorate and its supporters strongly opposed such a proposition. (Ibid.)

³ Neither found.

⁴ This paragraph of telegram 23967 reported that supporters of southern candidates Huong and Suu favored the run-off provision while supporters of the military candidate favored a single election.

run-off increases chances of Southern—and presumably civilian—candidate.

3. Issue squarely before us, then, is how strongly we should push for inclusion in electoral law of run-off or similar device, recognizing that our judgment on this score could affect outcome of presidential election and that our position could be interpreted as biased in favor of civilian candidate. Moreover, if we push for run-off or similar device to insure that President is elected by substantial majority (at least 40–45% of vote), this could force Loan, for example, to take stronger measures to ensure a Ky election victory.

4. On balance, we believe you should continue to urge strongly that CA adopt run-off or similar provision, pointing out to Deputies and Directorate (especially Ky and Thieu) unfortunate implication of minority President both internally in SVN and internationally.

5. Request your prompt comment.

Katzenbach

149. Notes on Discussions With President Johnson¹

Washington, April 27, 1967.

1. Westmoreland: "Without these forces (the 2-1/3 additional divisions plus 5 squadrons, making a total of 565,000 men in South Vietnam), we will not be in danger of being defeated, but it will be nip and tuck to oppose the reinforcements the enemy is capable of providing."

"In the final analysis, we are fighting a war of attrition in Southeast Asia."

"What is the next step? A second addition of 2-1/3 divisions, another 100,000 men, probably in FY 1969."

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 200, Reading File, April 1967. Top Secret. This document is a typed version of summary notes taken by Christian at meetings that day among the President, Rusk, McNamara, Katzenbach, Vance, Komer, Rostow, Wheeler, and Westmoreland. This group's first meeting was at 10:35 a.m. through 11:50 a.m.; it resumed meeting at 4:45 p.m. through 6:30 p.m. (Johnson Library, President's Daily Diary) Rostow's handwritten notes of these meetings are *ibid.*, National Security File, Files of Walt Rostow, Viet Nam. Rostow prepared background memoranda on the meetings with Westmoreland, April 24, 9:55 a.m. and 2:45 p.m. (*Ibid.*, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXX) Komer also prepared a memorandum to the President, April 27. (*Ibid.*, Files of Robert Komer, Memos to the President, Jan.–May 1967) Westmoreland was in Washington for a week-long visit. He gave a speech at West Point on April 24 and appeared before a joint session of Congress on April 28. For his speech, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1967*, pp. 921–922; for text of his remarks to Congress, see *Department of State Bulletin*, May 15, 1967, pp. 738–741.

2. Westmoreland: "I am frankly dismayed at even the thought of stopping the bombing program."

3. Westmoreland: "Cambodia may soon become a supplier of ammunition. The DRV's grand design incorporates the use of Cambodia as a supply base (first for rice and medical supplies as now, and later for ammunition) for DRV operations in South Vietnam."

4. Westmoreland: "The reinforcement of the First Corps has slowed down the assignment of the 9th Division to the Delta."

5. Westmoreland: "In summary, with the troops now in country, we are not going to lose, but progress will be slowed down."

"This is not an encouraging outlook, but it is a realistic one."

6. Westmoreland: "In the Fourth Corps, there is no threat of strategic VC victories and there are three good ARVN divisions there."

7. Westmoreland: "I believe we should confront the DRV with South Vietnamese forces in Laos."

"Operational plan 'High Port' creates an elite SVN division for this purpose. The US would build a road and logistic base for ARVN air and ground operations in Laos against the DRV base 609. The US would provide artillery and air support. Next, we would do the same thing for A Chau. Laos would become more and more the battlefield and this would take the pressure off the South."

8. Westmoreland: "This war is action and counter-action. Any time we take an action, we can expect a reaction."

9. Westmoreland: "It would be wise to think of the same plan [as that discussed for Laos] for Cambodia."²

"I have contingency plans to move into Cambodia in the Chu Pong area. We would use a South Vietnamese force but we would like US advisors to accompany them."

10. Westmoreland: "The VC and DRV strength in South Vietnam now totals 285,000 men. It appears that last month we reached the crossover point. In areas excluding the two northern provinces, attrition will be greater than additions to the force."

11. President: "When we add divisions, can't the enemy add divisions? If so, where does it all end?"

Westmoreland: "The enemy has 8 divisions in South Vietnam. He has the capability of deploying 12 divisions, although he would have difficulty supporting all of these. He would be hard pressed to support more than 12 divisions."

"If we add 2-1/3 divisions, it is likely the enemy will react by adding troops."

² Brackets in the source text.

President: "At what point does the enemy ask for volunteers?"

Westmoreland: "That is a good question."

12. Westmoreland: "With the present program of 470,000 men, we would be setting up a meat grinder. We would do a little better than hold our own. We would make progress, but we would have to use a fire brigade technique. Unless the will of the enemy was broken or unless there was an unraveling of the VC structure, the war could go on for five years. If our forces were increased, that period could be reduced, although not necessarily in proportion to increases in strength."

13. Westmoreland: "Other factors than increase in strength must, of course, be considered. We now have a professional US force. A non-professional force such as that which would result from fulfilling the requirement for 100,000 additional men by calling Reserves, will cause some degradation of morale, leadership and effectiveness."

14. Westmoreland: "With a force level of 565,000 men, the war could well go on for three years. With the second increment of 2-1/3 divisions, leading to a total of 665,000 men, it could go on for two years."

15. Wheeler: "The JCS is now reviewing possible responses to our further force buildup in South Vietnam. They consider we should be prepared to face the following: (a) North Korean pressure on South Korea to cause us to increase our forces in South Korea. (b) Soviet pressure on Berlin to cause us to reinforce NATO. (c) Volunteers sent to South Vietnam from the Soviet Union, North Korea, and Red China. (d) Overt intervention by Red China (for example, ChiCom movement into Thailand might be quite attractive to Red China)."

16. Wheeler: "Three other matters are bothering the JCS: (a) DRV troop activity in Cambodia. US troops may be forced to move against these units in Cambodia. (b) DRV troop activity in Laos. US troops may be forced to move against these units. (c) Possible invasion of North Vietnam. We may wish to take offensive action against the DRV with ground troops."

17. Wheeler: "The bombing campaign is reaching the point where we will have struck all worthwhile fixed targets except the ports. At this time we will have to address the requirement to deny to the DRV the use of the ports."

18. Wheeler: "In summary, the JCS believe the President must review the contingencies which we may face, the troops required to meet them, and additional punitive action against the DRV."

19. President: "What if we do not add the 2-1/3 divisions?"

Wheeler: "The momentum will die; in some areas the enemy will recapture the initiative. We won't lose the war, but it will be a longer one."

20. Wheeler: "Of the 2-1/3 divisions, I would add one division on the DMZ to relieve the Marines to work with ARVN on pacification;

and I would put one division east of Saigon to relieve the 9th Division to deploy to the Delta to increase the effectiveness of the three good ARVN divisions now there; the brigade I would send to Quang Ngai to make there the progress in the next year that we have made in Binh Dinh in the past year."

21. President: "We should make certain we are getting value received from the South Vietnamese troops. Check the discharges to determine whether we could make use of them by forming additional units, by mating them with US troops, as is done in Korea, or in other ways."

"President Park of Korea said he could form up two divisions of discharges for supply support. Should we not plan on meeting the requirement for 100,000 additional men in part with South Vietnamese and Koreans? Could we not form an international division adding additional Thais and Australians as well?"

150. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Komer) to President Johnson¹

Washington, April 27, 1967.

Handling Shift in Pacification. Bunker has asked me to come out soonest and I've told him that I hoped to be out about 1 May if you approved. I'd like to fly out with Westy (leaving Saturday)² or Abrams (leaving Monday).

Arrival of all members of the new team will revive press queries on the new set-up. With Bunker then on the ground a full week, he could cut this short by announcing the decisions. Having him announce them as his would emphasize that he is top dog in Saigon. I'd urge he do so at a press conference so that he could cover the issue by announcing other matters as well (e.g. announcing Cooper as Wehrle's replacement).³

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Robert Komer, Memos to the President, Jan–May 1967. Secret. The notation "L" on the memorandum indicates that the President saw it. In an earlier memorandum the same day, Komer underscored the need for the President to specifically request Westmoreland to improve the effectiveness of the ARVN. (Memorandum from Komer to the President, April 27; *ibid.*)

² April 29.

³ Bunker discussed the Mission's reorganization in a May 11 press conference. See *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1967*, pp. 926–928. Among his announcements was that Charles Cooper, a deputy to Komer at the White House, would replace LeRoy Wehrle as Counselor for Economic Affairs in June.

Assuming you decide to go the MACV route, the big criticism to head off is that this means further militarization of the war. I think that this can be knocked down by Bunker himself using the following leads:

1. You have appointed him No. 1 American in Saigon and given him full latitude to organize the US effort in the way he thinks best.

2. As an old corporation executive, he believes that unity of management and a clear chain of command down to the cutting edge is sound management practice.

3. Bunker thinks with Lodge that pacification is the “heart of the matter”, and that the key prerequisite to pacification is security. This means our military should play a key role in the US advisory effort on pacification.

4. So Bunker does not regard pacification as a civil or military problem, but as a civil/military problem. Hence his solution is to have US civilians and military work together.

5. To achieve these twin goals (unified management of an integrated US civil/military advisory effort), Bunker has decided to put Ambassador Komer in to head it as a deputy to General Westmoreland. Komer will manage both civil and military aspects of US pacification role.

6. As senior US official in Saigon Bunker expects to personally oversee US pacification advisory effort as he will everything else. With Komer managing joint effort from within MACV civilian role will be greater, not less.

7. While single US line of authority down to province level is essential, integrity of new civilian agency (OCO) will be preserved. It will remain a separate entity under Komer doing those things which civilians more experienced at handling than military. Best senior people will be as senior pacification advisors at province and region regardless of whether civilian or military.

8. Bunker believes that net result will be greater efficiency and economy in this key endeavor. Would end by reminding everyone that pacification is primarily a GVN show. New organization does not mean more US troops in pacification. It means a unified US advisory and support role.

If Bunker will say the above we'll draw enough of the short-term sting to minimize its impact. We can so instruct Bunker once you approve.

R. W. Komer⁴

⁴ Komer added the following handwritten postscript: “You were great today telling Westy to jack up the GVN and ARVN.” Komer is referring to the President’s remarks in Document 149.

151. Memorandum From Senator Mike Mansfield to President Johnson¹

Washington, April 29, 1967.

SUBJECT

Vietnam

1. *An Approach Via China*

Our bombings will continue to make Hanoi ever more heavily dependent on China. The road to settlement with Hanoi, now, very likely runs by way of Peking rather than Moscow.

Make a quiet and clearly conciliatory approach to China. (i.e. Pursue my earlier suggestion of my trying to arrange a trip to Peking; to be effective for opening the way to official talks, however, it would have to have, at least, tacit Presidential approval and should be designed to get from Chou En-lai in particular for the President, the Chinese view of what is needed for a settlement in Viet Nam and for the restoration of more normal relations throughout the Western Pacific.)

2. *An Approach Via United Nations*

Take the initiative on two resolutions in the Security Council:

1. An invitation to governments or political groups (China, North Viet Nam and N.L.F. and Saigon included) to present before the Security Council their views on the war and to discuss possibilities of a solution.

2. A request for an advisory opinion from the International Court on the applicability of the Geneva Accords to the current situation in Viet Nam.

3. *Border Barricade*

I know this matter has been discussed by you and your military and political advisors, but I think, in spite of the cost and the manpower necessary, it is a possibility worth looking into. First, the proposal is to barricade the area from the South China Sea across the 17th Parallel into and across Laos to either Savannakhet or Takhek on the Thai-Laotian frontier. This would be defended by mined fields, electrical fences, and other devices calling for an increased concentration of men and matériel over the 175-mile to 200-mile strip.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Name File, Senator Mansfield. No classification marking.

Questions might be raised about interfering with Laotian "neutrality" but I would point out that Laos is engaged in the present struggle and also that on the basis of the 1962 Geneva Accords, it was stipulated that all foreign troops should be withdrawn from Laos. North Vietnamese troops are stationed with the Pathet Lao and have not been withdrawn. Militarily, as indicated, it would require more men and matériel, but there is no reason why the barrier could not be manned to a large extent by South Vietnamese troops in defense of their own country. Politically, such a line would bring about a greater guarantee of Cambodia neutrality, thus minimizing an ever-present difficulty.

On this basis bombing of North Viet Nam would not be necessary. The main objectives of stopping or decreasing considerably the infiltration of men and matériel into Laos, and on the other hand, bringing Hanoi to the conference table, have both failed in any event. A manned barrier would decrease the inflow of men into South Viet Nam tremendously and allow for a greater concentration of effort to bring about stability without South Viet Nam itself, and to a very considerable extent confine the war to that country, which, as I understand it, is the country whose integrity and stability we have been trying to maintain. If this were done it is true that it would be at additional cost, but costs are going to be increased considerably anyway. It will mean more manpower, but manpower increases are going to occur regardless. Without losing anything, you meet the argument that bombing must stop before there is a possibility of negotiations. You confine your activity to a most limited, but at the same time the most important area, South Viet Nam; you lessen considerably the possibility of an "open ended" war, and you define an objective which is understandable by all and about which no questions can be repeatedly raised, as is the case at present.

In my opinion, if the present course of steady escalation is continued and as each escalating step fails to achieve its objective, the pressures will continue to increase on you and the possibility of a war with China will become more apparent. The bombing of Haiphong, in my opinion, will just mean a step-up of supplies by rails and roads into North Viet Nam from both China and the Soviet Union and the bombing of the airfields around Hanoi will only bring about a shifting of the planes from that area to South China, which in turn will raise the questions of "hot pursuit" and "sanctuaries". If we do become involved with China over North Viet Nam, it is my opinion that the wide and deep gulf which now exists between the Soviet Union and Peking will be "papered" over and they will unite against us and, furthermore, they will have the support in some form or other of the other Communist countries in the world.

I hope you will pardon me for laying these possibilities before you, but as you know, since our days when you were the Majority Leader

and I was your Assistant, and since you have become President and I have become Majority Leader, I have never given you an opinion but that I thought it worthwhile and in the nation's best interests. I have endeavored to do this on a constructive basis with an awareness of the difficulties you face and the responsibilities which are yours and yours alone in the last analysis. You may recall that when you were the Majority Leader and I was your Deputy sitting next to you, that on occasion I would lean over and tug at the back of your coat to signal that it was either time to close the debate or to sit down. Most of the time but not all the time you would do what I was trying to suggest. Since you have been President I have been figuratively tugging at your coat, now and again, and the only purpose has been to be helpful and constructive. I am sure that every suggestion I have made has been given consideration by you and I appreciate their courteous consideration. One last word—in my personal opinion, the hour is growing very, very late.

**152. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Rostow) to President Johnson¹**

Washington, April 30, 1967.

Dear Mr. President,

Secretary Rusk has now read and considered Senator Mansfield's proposals.² He has also talked to Ambassador Goldberg.³

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Name File, Senator Mansfield. No classification marking. The notation "L" on the memorandum indicates that the President saw it. The next day Rusk publicly listed 28 peace proposals made by the U.S. Government that Hanoi had rejected. The text of his May 1 remarks is in *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1967*, pp. 925–926.

² See Document 151.

³ Goldberg and Katzenbach discussed the Mansfield proposal with Rostow the previous day. Describing it as "a gimmick," Katzenbach stated his opposition to the proposal, while Goldberg favored at least undertaking the effort to submit such a UN resolution. (Memorandum from Rostow to the President, April 30, 11:45 a.m.; Johnson Library, National Security File, Name File, Senator Mansfield) On May 1 the President discussed the UN approach off the record at a breakfast with Senators Mansfield and Morse, Rusk, Katzenbach, Goldberg, and Presidential aide Joseph Califano. He did so again on May 3 (with Rostow replacing Califano). Mansfield sent a second memorandum to the President on May 3, in which he disputed Katzenbach's assertion that the proposal would be interpreted as "phony." It could only be viewed as phony if the administration pursued it accompanied by "some unwitting action or ineptitude." Such a proposal would not make the United States appear "either foolish or weak but rather willing to walk the extra mile." (Ibid., Vietnam, Mansfield Memo & Reply)

1—He is ready to take up in the Security Council Senator Mansfield's proposals.

2—Senator Mansfield should be clear that this proposal will be opposed by the Secretary General and a number of other members of the Security Council who will not wish to press this proposal because Hanoi has made clear that it does not wish the United Nations to get in a peace-making role in Southeast Asia.

3—With respect to visit to Communist China, the Secretary of State is strongly opposed. It would be a major intervention in a troubled situation. The Soviet Union would be upset and suspicious. Above all, Senator Mansfield should remember that he is "an officer of the United States Government," as a member of the legislative branch. Therefore there would be great confusion among our friends in free Asia, including the fear that we were about to sell them out.

4—The Secretary of State believes the proper way to proceed with respect to Communist China is to elevate the Warsaw talks to the Foreign Ministers level.⁴ He has been hesitant to propose this until the situation within Communist China has somewhat settled down.

5—Secretary Rusk does not share Senator Mansfield's conviction that Hanoi is now under the control of Peking, and that therefore the route to peace is through Peking. The evidence remains that they have balanced rather well their position between Moscow and Peking, maintaining a high degree of independence.

6—In respect to the World Court proposal, the World Court does not have jurisdiction in this problem. It is most doubtful that we can rally more than a few votes for the World Court to accept jurisdiction.

Walt W. Rostow comment:

I'm in general agreement with Secretary Rusk. There may be some advantage in holding up the move in the Security Council, however, until we hear at the end of the week what signals or messages Dobrynin brings back from Moscow.⁵

Signed,

WWR

⁴ These talks began in 1958 in the aftermath of the second Offshore Islands crisis.

⁵ According to Soviet officials at the United Nations, their government's opposition to the consideration of the issue of Vietnam in the Security Council remained intense; Goldberg was informed that the "US ought to realize the USSR would never tolerate UN consideration of the issue." (Telegram 5373 from USUN, May 19; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 27 VIET S/UN) On April 26 the State Department released a statement noting that the Soviet Union declined to use its "good offices" as a means of approaching the North Vietnamese on the matter of allowing Red Cross inspection of American prisoners of war in the DRV. See *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1967, p. 924.

Political Development in South Vietnam, May-June

153. Telegram From the Consulate in Hong Kong to the Department of State¹

Hong Kong, May 1, 1967, 0809Z.

7581. For Bundy From Rice. Ref: A. State 184833; B. Saigon 24361.²

1. I have no doubt whatever about validity of proposition that atmosphere of tension resulting from escalation of bombing in North Vietnam provides kind of climate in which Maoism tends to flourish, is useful to Mao in his efforts to control populace and armed forces, and bears unfavorably on prospects for emergence of more pragmatic regime in China.

2. The people of China have been told that Mao's great Cultural Revolution is, among other things, preparation for war. Our ever-mounting attacks on contiguous territory of China's Communist neighbor lends plausibility to the thesis that China itself is our ultimate target, and that preparation for war is national necessity. We see many reports testifying to resultant tension, which is particularly marked in coastal areas opposite Taiwan.

3. Mao is of course also carrying on his great Cultural Revolution in ways which themselves generate very great internal tensions. I think this is highly deliberate injection of adrenaline into blood streams of China's 700 millions, designed release enormous energy which Mao seeks to direct and exploit for multiple, inter-related and mutually-supporting purposes of his great Cultural Revolution.

4. A businessman who has just returned from Canton tells me he came out depressed and apprehensive: environment into which he was plunged from moment train crossed border into China was one of incessant, noisy propaganda which built in him intolerable sense of pressure and tension. It was his conviction this current atmosphere of tension must surely lead to early explosion. My acquaintance may underestimate Chinese ability to live with noise and capacity to bend without breaking. But China today is in period which parallels in many ways that of 1900 and there is a mass hysteria like that which characterized the Boxers. Latter believed their mumbo-jumbo made them in-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Exdis. Received at 6:38 a.m.

² Both dated April 29. (Ibid. and ibid., DEF 19-6 USSR-VIET N, respectively)

vulnerable much as Red Guards and other Chinese types of today believe that Mao's sayings will enable them individually to achieve the impossible and that a China armed with Mao's thought is invincible.

5. It is obvious that need to prepare for war can be used to justify and secure popular acceptance of austerity measures and personal sacrifices which regime imposes for multiple purposes of which war preparation is only one. It is similarly obvious that atmosphere of external danger and responsiveness of the military to their political masters are closely related. Even Mao's purge of his opponents is being justified on grounds which include allegations they either have already engaged in traitorous activity or are persons who would do so—like Wang Ching-wei during World War II—if foreign invasion afforded them the opportunity to turn against Mao's Communist state. If Mao succeeds in wholly discrediting or even killing off the pragmatists within what was the national leadership—and their ranks have taken heavy losses—the probable effect on prospects for emergence of more realistic top leadership seems clear. While things in China are not always what they seem, one would be unduly optimistic—in view of the way things have been going—confidently to expect emergence of a pragmatic regime in Peking while Mao is alive and in possession his faculties.

6. At the same time I am not confident that danger to U.S. posed by foregoing can be separated from contingency that escalation of our bombing will result in ChiCom military intervention in Vietnam, or—what seems to me more important—that latter contingency should be deemed remote in the sense of being an improbable final outcome. To deal with former point first: I think intentions of Chinese Communists under present circumstances are to engage our planes only when we approach or enter their air-space. But circumstances will not remain static and future Chinese decisions will be made against background of changes in overall situation and may be influenced also by the spirit of combativeness which is part of contagion carried by the Maoist revolution.

7. I realize that escalation of the bombing seems, given our basic assumptions, to have an inner logic: if one level of effort and range of targets does not achieve desired ends, we assume it did not do so because of insufficiency and we raise the level of our effort and increase the scope of our targets. The truth is that we probably cannot achieve through bombing the objectives we seem to be seeking, and that—paradoxical as that may seem—achieving them could in the end prove far more dangerous than failing to do so.

8. We can win against North Vietnam only by destroying either its will to fight or its ability to do so. What are our chances of doing either through bombing? First there is the matter of will. Some of the

leading exponents of initiating the bombings believed the Vietnamese Communists were pragmatists who would draw back rather than see their modern industries destroyed. It is now clear that this assessment was wrong: the North Vietnamese leaders and people give much higher priority to other objectives than preservation of that modern sector, which is not vital to people's livelihood. When this became apparent, continuation of the bombing was justified on the grounds we might be able to inflict a level of pain which might make North Vietnam throw in the towel. This is a false analogy which flies in the face of experience during World War II: pain is personal, and it cannot be inflicted on everybody at once on the acute level which makes it unendurable. Below that level pain only increases the will to fight.

10. [*sic*] What of North Vietnam's ability to continue the war under the bombings? The most obvious aspects of the matter are in abilities to defend against air attack and to supply the effort in the South. Vietnam is shaped like a funnel and North Vietnam is serving as the mouth of the funnel. The Communist powers controlling the Asian land mass ought to be able at each stage to estimate how much they need to pour in the funnel, of matériel and if need be of manpower, to maintain air defense, to replace what we destroy, and to have enough left over for the South (ref B).

11. If such a situation continues we will feel increasing pressure to carry out strikes against port facilities and perhaps ships at Haiphong, as well as stockpiles and transport lines across the border in China. But if the present war frustrates us, the widened one we would thus be inviting could ruin us.

12. If the foregoing logic proved wrong and the North Vietnamese really felt themselves to be in dire straits, they would still have an ace in the hole. The Chinese Communists are publicly committed to sending their men if necessary and when requested. I hardly think the Chinese Communists could refuse to honor this blank check should the Vietnamese present it. Thus, it seems to me, the war against North Vietnam is one in which winning could be more dangerous than failing to achieve decisive results.

13. Does this mean we cannot win the war we set out to fight—that in the South? I do not think it necessarily does, provided we have the wisdom to reassess the situation in its total political context, of which military considerations are only one component, and make relevant changes in our plans for future action. I have seen reports indicating that bulk of people in North Vietnam largely equate their war with U.S. to air war which is the only part they see and in which they are engaged. If we de-escalated air war against North Vietnam, considerable steam might go out total popular effort. In addition, more of world would see our endeavor to help GVN bring security to its peo-

ple as worthy of support if our efforts were concentrated there instead of being obscured by our bombing of North.

14. Our political aim should have been to achieve respect for right of South Vietnam to separate existence, whereas our military strategy has had effect of tending overtly merge all Vietnam into the unity which is one theater of war. Our total effort may have greater chance of success if we reverse our present course of ever-widening attacks against the wide part of the funnel which is North Vietnam and concentrate our efforts towards and in Vietnam's narrow neck in the South. In any case I think the road we are now on cannot be followed to its end except at disproportionate cost and grave peril. It is this, I think, which should give us concern rather than the effect of bombings on possibility of negotiations which, I have always felt, could lead to settlement satisfactory to us only after it became evident our efforts in South Vietnam were going to succeed.

Rice

154. Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (Bundy) to the Under Secretary of State (Katzenbach)¹

Washington, May 1, 1967.

SUBJECT

Thoughts on Strategy in Vietnam

This sets down the line of thought that I expressed orally to Secretary McNamara, at his request, on Saturday.² It covers my present view on the questions you are considering. I submit it because I shall be necessarily absent from your meeting this afternoon, and you may wish to use this in any way you see fit.³

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Bundy Files: Lot 85 D 240, Top Secret WPB Chron, May 1967. Top Secret.

² April 28.

³ No record of the meeting has been found.

I. Factors Affecting Possible Changes in Our Military Action

A. *Force Increases.* In terms of contribution to our strategy over the next nine months, I believe any increase directly related to meeting the threat in the northern part of SVN, and at the same time not reducing our effort in II and III Corps unacceptably, must be considered essential. (I have just lunched with Paul Nitze, who gives an off-the-cuff estimate that we may need a total increase of 50,000 to meet this specification.)

To the extent that any increase is related to needs in the Delta, I would be most skeptical of the total advantage of such action at least this year. The Delta does not lend itself to the most effective application of our forces, and the Viet Cong in the Delta are in key areas so deeply dug in that in the end they will be routed out only by a major change in the over-all situation, and particularly in the prestige and effectiveness of the GVN. (For example, this is already Colonel Wilson's conclusion with respect to key areas in Long An.)

In sum, we should leave IV Corps basically to the GVN, trying to deny it as a source of food and men, but leaving it to be truly pacified more slowly and later.

Apart from the military merits, any force increase that reaches the "Plimsoll Line"—calling up the Reserves—involves a truly major debate in Congress. Under present circumstances, I believe such a debate could only encourage Hanoi, and might also lead to pressures to go beyond what is wise in the North, specifically mining Haiphong. Unless there are over-riding military reasons—which I do not myself see—we should not get into such a debate this summer.

B. *Ground Action Against North Vietnam.* I understand this to be only a contingency thought in any event. I would be totally against it, for the simple reason that I believe the chances are 75–25 that it would bring the Chinese truly into the war and, almost equally important, stabilize the internal Chinese situation at least temporarily.

C. *Laos.* Last Friday we went through General Starbird's plans for more effective action against the Corridor in Laos.⁴ I think these make sense, although they cannot be expected to do more than make use of the Corridor somewhat more difficult. (We should at once get away from linking these with the true "Obstacle" planned in the eastern area of SVN next to the DMZ. The two are entirely different, and the words "obstacle" or "barrier" as related to Laos have very unfortunate political implications in both Laos and Thailand.) The small ground force teams Starbird needs in Laos can be handled, in Sullivan's judgment.

⁴ The section of the barrier that ran through Laos would include small teams used for reconnaissance and interdiction.

Beyond this point, Sullivan and I would both be strongly opposed to any such idea as sending a GVN division into Laos. It would almost certainly be ineffective, and the cry would at once go up to send more. Sullivan believes, and I agree, that Souvanna would object violently and feel that his whole position had been seriously compromised.

D. *Cambodia*. Evidence in the last ten days does indicate that the Sihanouk Trail out of northern Cambodia and across the southern tip of Laos is indeed a substantial source of supply. It may be that there are other supply routes from Cambodia that cross into SVN. Nonetheless, I doubt very much at this stage if any significant change in our actions in Cambodia would really affect these supply routes or be worth the broad political damage of appearing to attack Cambodia. Essentially, I think Sihanouk is slowly moving to a more truly neutral position and is doing about all he can to ease the problem. I do not think, as I understand Westmoreland may have argued, that Sihanouk is at all inclined to join the other side. He might, however, do so if he thought we were really attacking him for its own sake. (The Holt visit made clear that he accepts what we are doing now and is really only protesting for the record so long as we keep it within bounds).⁵

E. *Additional Action in the North*. Of the major targets still not hit, I would agree to the Hanoi power station, but then let it go at that, subject only to occasional re-strikes where absolutely required. In particular, on the airfields, I think we have gone far enough to hurt and not far enough to drive the aircraft to Chinese fields, which I think could be very dangerous.

I would strongly oppose the mining of Haiphong at any time in the next nine months, *unless* the Soviets categorically use it to send in combat weapons. (It may well be that we should warn them quietly but firmly that we are watching their traffic into Haiphong very closely, and particularly from this standpoint.) Mining of Haiphong, at any time, is bound to risk a confrontation with the Soviets and to throw Hanoi into greater dependence on Communist China. These in themselves would be very dangerous and adverse to the whole notion of getting Hanoi to change its attitude. Moreover, I think they would somehow manage to get the stuff in through China no matter what we did to Haiphong.

II. *Over-All Assessment of the Situation*

A. *A Steady, Firm Course*. Since roughly the first of December, I think we have given a very jerky and impatient impression to Hanoi.

⁵ Holt visited Washington and met with the President July 13–14, 1966, to discuss the war in Southeast Asia. For text of a joint communiqué that summarized their talks, see Department of State *Bulletin*, August 8, 1966, pp. 212–213. Holt visited Washington again June 1–2, 1967; for statements at his arrival ceremony, see *ibid.*, June 26, 1967, pp. 960–963.

This is related more to the timing and suddenness of our bombing and negotiating actions than to the substance of what we have done. I think that Hanoi in any event believes that the 1968 elections could cause us to change our position or even lose heart completely. Our actions since early December may well have encouraged and greatly strengthened this belief that we wish to get the war over by 1968 at all costs. Our major thrust must be now to persuade them that we are prepared to stick it if necessary. This means a steady and considered program of action for the next nine months.

B. *The Real Key Factors in the Situation.* I believe we are making steady progress in the South, and that there are things we can do—notably effort with ARVN—to improve the present slow pace of pacification. Over-all progress in the South remains the key factor that could bring Hanoi to the right attitude and actions.

The really important element in the South over the next few months is political. There could be a tremendous gain if the elections are honest and widely participated in, and if the result is a balanced civilian/military government that commands real support in the South. Such a gain would do more than any marginal action, except for the essential job of countering the Communist thrust in I Corps.

At the same time, if the election process is thwarted by a military coup or if it is turned into a military steamroller, the results could be sharply negative. We might even be forced to re-assess our basic policy. This is simply a measure of the vital importance of the political front for this year.

In addition, we must consider at all times the effect of the Chinese internal situation. We cannot affect whether convulsion resumes, but we should certainly avoid actions that might tend to reduce the possibility of convulsion. (This is argued strenuously by Edward Rice in Hong Kong 7581, received today.)⁶

Argued in another way, I would now reckon that the odds are considerably better than 50–50 that there will be a renewal of convulsion in China in the next few months. In December and January, I think this was the added factor that caused Hanoi to give off a “tremor” and at least to make a significant tactical change in its position. If convulsion now occurs again, it will offset whatever encouragement Hanoi may have received from the apparent recent promise of additional Soviet aid and the easing of whatever transit [*transient?*] tensions may have existed between Moscow and Peking. In fact, renewed convulsion in China could at some point become a really major factor to Hanoi. This is a dubious effect on which we cannot and should not rely. But it serves

⁶ Document 153.

to put into focus the relative importance of any additional military actions, particularly in the North. And it is a very strong argument indeed against any additional step-up in our bombing of the North, or mining Haiphong.

C. *Over-All Estimate*. If we go on as we are doing, if the political process in the South comes off well, and if the Chinese do not settle down, I myself would reckon that by the end of 1967 there is at least a 50-50 chance that a favorable tide will be running really strongly in the South, and that Hanoi will be very discouraged. Whether they will move to negotiate is of course a slightly different question, but we could be visibly and strongly on the way.

If China should go into a real convulsion, I would raise these odds slightly, and think it clearly more likely that Hanoi would choose a negotiating path to the conclusion.

III. Negotiating Strategy

While we need a thorough review of our whole objectives and negotiating position, I doubt very much if we shall find any points on which we now wish to change our public position or to take any new initiative vis-à-vis Hanoi.

Basically in line with the idea of conveying an impression of steady firmness to Hanoi, I think we should avoid new initiatives except as we have to respond to some significant third party such as U Thant or the Canadians. I would certainly not go into the UN or the World Court.

Behind this strategy lies the judgment that Hanoi is in all probability dug in at least until after the Vietnamese elections. After that, we could take another look, but I still doubt that any serious change will be indicated. If it is, some approach like the Ne Win one seems to me by far the most promising.

A key question is of course how we handle the Soviets. My own hunch is that Kosygin burned his fingers somewhat in February, but that they have built their position in Hanoi at least back to its former level. In the process, they will have almost certainly undertaken some additional aid. Knowing as they do all our peace moves, they may have a strong feeling that we are in a hurry and perhaps susceptible to change. This would argue against pressing them hard in the near future, as we did in early April in any event.

On the other hand, we certainly could impress upon them our belief that their own interest lies in getting the situation resolved, and that they should be exerting real influence to this end. But this should be coupled with a calm firmness in our own determination to go ahead and not to be thrown off by anything additional they may be doing or threaten to do. In the last analysis, they can judge whether they really have any leverage and how to exert it.

At any rate, the next major contacts with the Soviets—Dobrynin's return and Brown's visit to Moscow in late May—should in my judgment be played in this measured but essentially low key unless they come up with something. Brown is not himself inclined to try something new at the moment, and we should do nothing to encourage him. (He has a full plate anyway of other issues.)

IV. International Factors

My negative feeling on serious additional bombing of the North and mining of Haiphong is based essentially on the belief that these actions will *not* change Hanoi's position, or affect Hanoi's capabilities in ways that counter-balance the risks and adverse reaction in China and with the Soviets alone.

Nonetheless, I cannot leave out the wider international factors, and particularly the British and Japanese as bell-wethers. Both the latter have accepted our recent bombings with much less outcry than I, frankly, would have anticipated. But if we keep it up at this pace, or step up the pace, I doubt if the British front will hold. Certainly we will be in a very bad Donnybrook next fall in the UN.

Whatever the wider implications of negative reactions on a major scale, the main point is that they would undoubtedly stiffen Hanoi, and this is always the gut question.

Note: I am sending you copies of this, and retaining one in a totally private file. This memorandum has been seen and discussed with no one except the typist.

155. Editorial Note

Significant opposition to the expansion of the war in Vietnam existed within the civilian leadership of the Department of Defense. In a May 1, 1967, memorandum to Secretary of Defense McNamara (discussed with him in a face-to-face meeting that day), Alain Enthoven, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Systems Analysis, presented a gloomy forecast for the outcome of the war. He argued that a "dangerously clever" North Vietnamese strategy was coming to fruition: the Communists could sustain their current level of losses indefinitely; in turn, a perceived lack of progress would cause (and indeed was causing) the American public to reject continued support of the war effort. "Hanoi is betting that we'll lose public support in the United States before we build a nation in South Vietnam. . . . Our horse must cross the

finish line first," Enthoven warned. The loss of public support had to be slowed; the development of South Vietnam had to be accelerated. However, another large increase in U.S. forces in Vietnam would not contribute to this dual goal, he insisted. In fact, it would intensify antiwar opposition and retard the nation-building effort in South Vietnam. Since U.S. forces in Vietnam exceeded by 28 battalions the minimal number necessary to counter the enemy's combat threat, according to Enthoven's estimation, there was no need for additional deployments in light of current analysis of the enemy's intentions. For text of the memorandum, see U.S. House of Representatives, Armed Services Committee, *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967, Study Prepared by the Department of Defense*, Book 5, pages 117–128 of volume II. In a May 4 memorandum to McNamara, Enthoven also statistically analyzed the results of ground engagements. He determined that "the size of the force we deploy has little effect on the rate of attrition of enemy forces." (Ibid., pages 114–116 of volume II)

156. Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (Bundy) to Secretary of State Rusk¹

Washington, May 2, 1967.

SUBJECT

Bombing Program and UN Approach—Information Memorandum for Today's Lunch²

Since I am going to be in the House Foreign Affairs Committee all morning, I am putting my views on paper for whatever use they may be to you.

RT-56 Proposals. I have general sympathy with Secretary McNamara's proposal that we finish off major targets and then cut back to the 20th parallel, with a quiet indication to the Russians that we are doing so.

However, even in these terms I believe that the present RT-56 is just too big a dose to take quickly, and I have grave reservations

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Top Secret; Eyes Only. A copy was sent to Katzenbach.

² The regular foreign policy Tuesday Luncheon was held 1:27–2:50 p.m.; the President met with Rusk, McNamara, Rostow, and Christian. (Johnson Library, President's Daily Diary) No notes of the meeting have been found.

whether we should hit the Doumer Bridge and the Phuc Yen airfield *at all*. Taking the latter first, I think our attacks on airfields to date have gone far enough to hurt but not far enough to cause them to move aircraft to Chinese airfields; if we hit Phuc Yen, particularly if we do it successfully, I should think Hanoi would almost inevitably conclude that it had better plan on the assumption we were going to make their airfields untenable and get in touch with the Chinese to move all or a part of their aircraft. The consequences could be most dangerous in terms of future incidents and in general in terms of the Chinese becoming involved and tensions going up so that their internal troubles ease off.

In the case of the Doumer Bridge, I would suppose the chances of really knocking it out were not truly great in any event. We should recall that this is the general area of the December reports of civilian damage, and I should think that this one alone could well blow the lid in Britain and elsewhere, if—as seems to me highly likely—there are reports (true or not) of major civilian casualties.

Even without these, I would space these attacks at least over two weeks and not—as present favorable weather makes likely—over a few days. We may know that we intend to lay off after these strikes, *but the other side does not*. I think we have already gone to the edge of precipitating serious decisions in Hanoi, Moscow, and Peking, and I have truly grave fears that another sharp burst could drive them over the edge and cause them to make serious decisions.

In short, I would put off Phuc Yen and the Doumer Bridge entirely and space the other strikes over 2–3 weeks. This need only postpone slightly the kind of cutback to the 20th parallel that Secretary McNamara has in mind.³

The UN Proposal. I understand that this may not come up at lunch. Nonetheless, having gone over Sisco's careful analysis of the pros and cons,⁴ I come out overwhelmingly negative. I think the "pros" would evaporate against the "cons" and I really think the whole exercise—to

³ Included in the target package for RT56, authorized on May 2, were strikes on airfields, railway yards, and two small thermal power plants at Haiphong. Attacks on the airfield at Phuc Yen and the Doumer Bridge, as well as on the Hanoi Thermal Power Plant, were deleted from the target list. See Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960–1968*, Part III, pp. 41–8–41–9.

⁴ In a May 2 memorandum to Rusk, Sisco argued that the proposal to take the issue of Vietnam to the UN Security Council would widen public support for the administration, demonstrate the commitment of the U.S. Government to the United Nations, open new avenues for peace, and place the other side in a bad position in case the measure failed. However, in arguing against the proposal, Sisco pointed out that the required votes for the issue's adoption on the agenda of the Security Council would be difficult to obtain, and a failure would have ramifications for domestic international support for U.S.

whatever degree it came to light even in consultation—would give the wrong signal to Hanoi and tend to put our good faith in jeopardy in whatever quarters were consulted or heard of it. It simply has no serious chance of making a substantive contribution at present, and it would be regarded, in my honest judgment, as a rather cheap piece of theater that was really totally cynical in view of our bombing actions of these weeks.

Most basically, my central feeling is that we have conveyed a terribly jerky and impatient impression to Hanoi since roughly the first of December. This relates to spacing and timing of actions more than to substance. It seems to me fundamental that we should now level out our pattern of action as much as possible. A continued bombing spasm is at variance with this need, and a spasm followed by resort to the UN would be doubly so.⁵

Apologies for being so negative, but, as I have spelled out at greater length to the Under Secretary in writing—I just don't think these are the tactics that will get us the coon skin.

I have kept no copies of this.

W.P.B.

policy in Vietnam. In addition, the Communists would view the effort as a ploy, given the intensification of military measures at the time, or at the very least a sign of weakness. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S)

⁵ Clifford also advised the President against the proposal to submit Vietnam to the UN Security Council. He believed that it would compel Johnson to halt bombing unilaterally and limit offensive military options that “might interfere with the advantages which we believe will accrue” from the September elections. He recommended postponing such a move until after the vote in South Vietnam. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXX, Memos (A)) On May 11 Goldberg sent Johnson a draft resolution to be submitted to the Security Council which called for consideration of the Vietnam issue. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S) President Johnson decided against proceeding with the submission of the issue until at least June. (Memorandum from Sisco to Rusk, May 12; *ibid.*)

157. Memorandum From McGeorge Bundy to President Johnson¹

New York, May 3, 1967.

Dear Mr. President:

First let me thank you most warmly for your kindness in letting me come in the other day to talk about the possible East-West center on management science and my forthcoming trip to Moscow. The guidance you gave me was very clear, and I am getting myself up to date on all the diplomatic background just in case there should be any serious talk on Vietnam. I will be in Washington for this purpose and for an invisible task force meeting (one of Ben Heineman's) on May 6, 7 and 8.

Meanwhile, I have been conscious of the fact that I did not give you much help when you asked what more I could suggest for us to do in Vietnam. I have now brooded over your question and done the attached memorandum. As you will see, it comes out pretty strong on the side of limiting the bombing in the North, but you know me too well to mistake this for a sudden switch to appeasement. I have been for bombing from the beginning and I am sure it has been and still is indispensable, but I just don't believe the people who think that a lot more of it brings us nearer to solution today. I think a middle course is better, and the memorandum attempts to suggest one, as well as to show where you can get some unexpected (to me) support for it.

I think we are in a time not unlike the spring of 1965 when the Baltimore speech² did so much to bring our policy into focus and balance, and it is in the spirit of our discussions of that time that this memo has been drafted. I am not on top of all the relevant information, of course, and I know better than anyone that I could be wrong—but I sensed in our last talk that you were interested in alternatives to think about, and these pages suggest one.

Bob McNamara knows my thinking a little, but no one else does, and even Bob has not seen this memo.

Respectfully,

Mac

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Walt Rostow, Viet Nam—W.W. Rostow (1 of 2). Personal. Notations on the memorandum indicate that it was received at noon on May 4 and that the President saw it.

² Reference is to Johnson's April 7, 1965, speech at Johns Hopkins University; see *Foreign Relations, 1964–1968*, vol. II, Document 245.

Attachment

MEMORANDUM ON VIETNAM POLICY

American opinion is increasingly uneasy about Vietnam because there appear to be no defined limits to the levels of force and danger that may lie ahead. Anyone who knows the President and his principal advisers will be confident that they are keeping a very sharp eye on the real risks involved, and the record of the two years since Pleiku does not suggest that the prophets of gloom and doom have a very good batting average—in fact, both Russian and Chinese reactions have been well within the limits of national estimates in all cases known to me. (In this connection the especially good record of the CIA estimators deserves note.) But the caution and restraint of the top men are better known to the few than to the many.

Since the Communist turndown of our latest offers in February, there has been an intensification of bombing in the North, and press reports suggest that there will be further pressure for more attacks on targets heretofore immune. There is also obvious pressure from the military for further reinforcements in the South, although General Westmoreland has been a model of discipline in his public pronouncements. One may guess, therefore, that the President will soon be confronted with requests for 100,000–200,000 more troops and for authority to close the harbor in Haiphong. Such recommendations are inevitable, in the framework of strictly military analysis. It is the thesis of this paper that in the main they should be rejected, and that as a matter of high national policy there should be a publicly stated ceiling to the level of American participation in Vietnam, as long as there is no further marked escalation on the enemy side.

There are two major reasons for this recommendation: the situation in Vietnam and the situation in the United States. As to Vietnam, it seems very doubtful that further intensifications of bombing in the North or major increases in U. S. troops in the South are really a good way of bringing the war to a satisfactory conclusion. As to the United States, it seems clear that uncertainty about the future size of the war is now having destructive effects on the national will.

On the ineffectiveness of the bombing as a means to end the war, I think the evidence is plain—though I would defer to expert estimators. Ho Chi Minh and his colleagues simply are not going to change their policy on the basis of losses from the air in North Vietnam. No intelligence estimate that I have seen in the last two years has ever claimed that the bombing would have this effect. The President never claimed that it would. The notion that this was its purpose has been limited to one school of thought and has never been the official Government position, whatever critics may assert.

I am very far indeed from suggesting that it would make sense now to stop the bombing of the North altogether. The argument for that course seems to me wholly unpersuasive at the present. To stop the bombing today would be to give the Communists something for nothing, and in a very short time all the doves in this country and around the world would be asking for some further unilateral concessions. (Doves and hawks are alike in their insatiable appetites; we can't really keep the hawks happy by small increases in effort—they come right back for more.)

The real justification for the bombing, from the start, has been double—its value for Southern morale at a moment of great danger, and its relation to Northern infiltration. The first reason has disappeared but the second remains entirely legitimate. Tactical bombing of communications and of troop concentrations—and of airfields as necessary—seems to me sensible and practical. It is strategic bombing that seems both unproductive and unwise. It is true, of course, that all careful bombing does some damage to the enemy. But the net effect of this damage upon the military capability of a primitive country is almost sure to be slight. (The lights have not stayed off in Haiphong, and even if they had, electric lights are in no sense essential to the Communist war effort.)³ And against this distinctly marginal impact we have to weigh the fact that strategic bombing does tend to divide the U. S., to distract us all from the real struggle in the South, and to accentuate the unease and distemper which surround the war in Vietnam, both at home and abroad. It is true that careful polls show majority support for the bombing, but I believe this support rests upon an erroneous belief in its effectiveness as a means to end the war. Moreover, I think those against extension of the bombing are more passionate on balance than those who favor it. Finally, there is certainly a point at which such bombing does increase the risk of conflict with China or the Soviet Union, and I am sure there is no majority for that. In particular, I think it clear that the case against going after Haiphong harbor is so strong that a majority would back the Government in rejecting that course.

³ The President asked McNamara to get the Joint Chiefs of Staff to respond to McGeorge Bundy. In a May 5 memorandum to the President, Wheeler noted that Bundy had failed to mention a third original reason for enacting the bombing campaign; namely, to ensure that the DRV would "pay a price for its continued aggression against South Vietnam." The attacks on the electrical power system (at Haiphong), Wheeler countered, were not intended to deny lighting to major cities but to disrupt a power source needed for the North Vietnamese armament-supporting facilities. He also recommended tactical bombardment of the Hanoi Thermal Power Plant as well as Haiphong harbor. This memorandum was sent to the President at the LBJ Ranch as CAP 67398, May 6. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Walt Rostow, Viet Nam—W.W. Rostow (2 of 2)) The President was at his ranch May 4–8. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary)

So I think that with careful explanation there would be more approval than disapproval of an announced policy restricting the bombing closely to activities that support the war in the South. General Westmoreland's speech to the Congress made this tie-in, but attacks on power plants really do not fit the picture very well. We are attacking them, I fear, mainly because we have "run out" of other targets. Is it a very good reason? Can anyone demonstrate that such targets have been very rewarding? Remembering the claims made for attacks on oil supplies, should we not be very skeptical of new promises?

The case against major troop reinforcement in the South is more complicated and I advance it with somewhat less conviction. In particular, the points I have to make do not say in any decisive way whether the limit should be set just where it is today or some tens of thousands higher. All that I can say is that I think there should be a limit and that it should be stated and understood fairly soon.

The American forces in Vietnam have been decisive in preventing defeat and in opening a hope of real success. They have been magnificently handled and their performance has been worthy of their leadership. Perhaps their most important achievement has been to buy time for the rehabilitation of the Vietnamese forces to which General Westmoreland paid such glowing tribute. But this war will have no end as long as it merely pits foreign troops against Communists. In the end, it is safety in the villages that is the object of the war. Cabot Lodge had it right when he quoted Ho Chi Minh on the decisiveness of the contest among the villagers of South Vietnam. I believe that a clearly defined limit on the American forces in South Vietnam would serve to focus the attention of all on this centrally *Vietnamese* task and on the continuing responsibility of the South Vietnamese themselves. The forces we have now on the scene can continue to give severe punishment to Communist main-force units, and even in the village war American troops can have a most constructive role, as some dispatches from the central area suggest. But where the requirement of 1965 was for proof of the American effort, the requirement of 1967 is for re-emphasis upon the role of the Vietnamese themselves, always with our advice and support.

Just as a recommendation against strategic bombing should not be confused with the "stop-the-bombing" campaign, so this suggestion of a troop ceiling should not be confused with the fatuous proposal that American troops be confined to "enclaves." The "enclave" proposal is a good way of losing first the countryside and then the country. My point is simpler and more limited: in the absence of major Communist escalation, we are reaching the point of diminishing returns from U.S. troop buildups.

So far I have been talking about the validity of limitation in relation to Vietnam. There is, I think, an equal validity when we look at the home front. The best observers agree that the only hope in Hanoi today is for American disunity and war weariness. On this point I think Westmoreland and Lodge are both right, and it seems to me the height of pettiness to criticize them for expressing these honest (and I think accurate) views. But their argument underlines the critical importance of holding the country together and giving it a solid basis for confident determination in its persistence. I believe that restriction of strategic bombing and a ceiling on troops are both entirely justified in terms of the overall situation in Vietnam itself; they are still more justified by their value in stabilizing American opinion. In April 1965, in his Baltimore speech, the President laid out a balanced program of military firmness and readiness for unconditional negotiation. In spite of all the costs and uncertainties of the last two years, that platform has worn well. Now we need a fresh and clear statement which will limit the fears of our own people and at the same time underline our national determination to stay the course.

It is true that some civil and military hawks would criticize any such policy of announced restraint. The criticism can be countered—in my judgment—by a powerful assembly of technical and expert opinion as to the lack of value of strategic bombing and the great importance of avoiding endless increases in American manpower. I am confident, on the basis of a recent conversation, that General Lauris Norstad would be willing to accept the task of rounding up senior Air Force heroes like Spaatz and Twining—and he thinks perhaps even Le May—to support a policy of bombing restraint.⁴ (Norstad himself would actually stop the bombing in the North—at least for a while—but I think he would gladly fall in with the present proposal to restrict ourselves to the “tactical.”) I suspect that a similar effort could be launched through General Bradley in favor of a policy of troop limitation. (Obviously, the position will be greatly reinforced as and when we are able to refer to a new and stronger military/technological barricade against infiltration.)

More generally, I think there is no one on earth who could win an argument that an active deployment of some 500,000 men, firmly supported by tactical bombing in both South and North Vietnam, represented an undercommitment at this time. I would not want to be the politician, *or* the general, who whined about such a limitation.

There is a major diplomatic scenario which could be developed to go along with a national decision of this sort. In essence, it would avoid any further public campaigns for negotiation, for the present, while

⁴ Generals Carl Spaatz, Nathan Twining, and Curtis LeMay were all former Air Force Chiefs of Staff and architects of the doctrine of strategic bombing.

maintaining every possible private diplomatic contact. It would anticipate a demonstration during the next 6 to 9 months that this kind of course—"steady as we go"—could be matched by political gains in the South and by increasing South Vietnamese self-reliance. It would be prepared to move dramatically once more in the field of negotiations sometime early in 1968. There is a great deal of underbrush that could be cleared away at the right time, so as to demonstrate plainly to all who will look that reasonable ways out are open for the taking to all who are fighting on the wrong side in Vietnam. There are also many *unilateral* steps that a more self-confident South Vietnamese government could take with the help of a man like Bunker.

It may seem queer that there should be room for such political action when we have said so much about our decent position on so many occasions. But there are more and busier lawyers among the doves—worldwide—than among ourselves, so that a strong new statement of our position—at the right time—could be helpful. Such a new statement, incidentally, need not contain any soft concessions of the sort Lodge fears; the fact is that we are—as we should be—ready to do anything *at all* that can really lead to free choice in the South.

A case can be made for a strong new diplomatic effort now. But my present view is that this effort should wait. I think we got a clear No in February and should wait a while before we go back to the well. I also think we ought to wait until after the South Vietnamese election. The present issue is not "negotiation." It is "escalation." What is undermining national unity now is the prospect of one more unrewarding debate between the advocates and the opponents of escalation, each shouting at the other against a backdrop of worldwide fear of a third war. The most valuable single step for all of us now would be a clear public demonstration, by a publicly proclaimed decision, of what the top of the government knows so well—that the President himself is a man of peace *and* determination, restraint *and* perseverance, who knows what the war is really about, and how to keep it in bounds while pressing it towards success. Above all we need a renewed demonstration that the President is in charge of the war, and not the other way around.

There is one further argument against major escalation in 1967 and 1968 which is worth stating separately, because on the surface it seems cynically political. It is that Hanoi is going to do everything it possibly can to keep its position intact until after our 1968 elections. Given their history, they are *bound* to hold out for a possible U. S. shift in 1969—that's what they did against the French, and they got most of what they wanted when Mendes took power. Having held on so long this time, and having nothing much left to lose—compared to the chance of victory—they are bound to keep on fighting. Since only

atomic bombs could really knock them out (an invasion of North Vietnam would not do it in two years, and is of course ruled out on other grounds), they have it in their power to “prove” that military escalation does not bring peace—at least over the next two years. They will surely do just that. However much they may be hurting, they are not going to do us any favors before November 1968. (And since this was drafted, they have been publicly advised by Walter Lippmann to wait for the Republicans—as if they needed the advice and as if it was his place to give it!)

It follows that escalation will not bring visible victory over Hanoi before the election. Therefore the election will have to be fought by the Administration on other grounds. I think those other grounds are clear and important, and that they will be obscured if our policy is thought to be one of increasing—and ineffective—military pressure.

If we assume that the war will still be going on in November 1968, and that Hanoi will not give us the pleasure of consenting to negotiations sometime before then, what we must plan to offer as a defense of Administration policy is not victory over Hanoi, but growing success—and self-reliance—in the South. This we can do, with luck, and on this side of the parallel the Vietnamese authorities should be prepared to help us out (though of course the VC will do their damndest against us.) Large parts of Westy’s speech (if not quite all of it) were wholly consistent with this line of argument.⁵

Moreover, if we can avoid escalation-that-does-not-seem-to-work, we can focus attention on the great and central achievement of these last two years: on the defeat we have prevented. The fact that South Vietnam has not been lost and is not going to be lost is a fact of truly massive importance in the history of Asia, the Pacific, and the U. S. An articulate minority of “Eastern intellectuals” (like Bill Fulbright) may not believe in what they call the domino theory, but most Americans (along with nearly all Asians) know better. Under this Administration the United States has *already* saved the hope of freedom for hundreds of millions—in this sense, the largest part of the job is done. This critically important achievement is obscured by seeming to act as if we have to do much more lest we fail.

At some point—probably *not* in connection with any decision to limit the bombing to tactical targets—we ought to get Peace Corps volunteers into Vietnam. It makes no sense for all these decent and energetic youngsters to pass by on the other side of the street when there are literally hundreds of good things for them to do in Vietnam. This

⁵ A reference to Westmoreland’s April 28 speech before Congress; see footnote 1, Document 149.

idea has been explored in the past, and it has always run into bureaucratic resistance. But what the bureaucrats overlook is the good it would do at home. Almost all U. S. volunteers in village work in Vietnam have come home strong supporters of the war. Instead of battering at the disaffected young, we could begin to convert them with such an effort in Vietnam.

158. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, May 3, 1967, 1130Z.

24624. For the President from Bunker. Herewith my first weekly telegram.

A. General.

1. I have spent the major part of my first week here in on the job training trying to familiarize myself with organization and the activities of the Mission, getting briefed by members of the Council on the status of our major programs, and trying to get a feel for the situation here. In this connection, I have found that Ambassador Porter's willingness to continue on here until May 5 is of inestimable value. His vast store of knowledge about the situation here which includes the work of the Mission both here and in the field, personnel, and his personal relationships with members of the Vietnamese Government have been of inestimable value. Ambassador Locke, who arrived May 1, will be working closely with Ambassador Porter also until the latter's departure May 5.

2. General Westmoreland arrived yesterday and reported to me today on his talks in Washington, and we had a preliminary talk about organization of the pacification program, about which I shall report separately after Bob Komer's arrival and I have had an opportunity to talk further with him and General Westmoreland. In this connection, I

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Priority; Nodis. Passed to the White House. In a covering memorandum transmitting the telegram to the President, May 3, Rostow wrote: "Herewith Ambassador Bunker's first report. His orderly, judicious mind, plus the spirit in the last paragraph will, I believe, hearten you." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Nodis Vol. VI) This telegram is printed in full in Douglas Pike, *The Bunker Papers: Reports to the President From Vietnam, 1967–1973*, pp. 1–7.

have reported separately (Saigon's 24265² and 24286)³ statements made by both Thieu and Ky relative to their views on pacification. Both have said the right words, and it remains to be seen whether deeds will match the words. I have no doubt of their intentions but I am sure that they and others engaged in the program which has to be primarily a Vietnamese effort will need the most effective and efficient support we can render.

B. Political.

3. The political scene is mixed. To summarize: elections for village councils have now been successfully completed, with an over-all turnout of 2,511,455 or 77 percent. Although the Viet Cong killed 12 candidates and kidnapped 31, they were not able to disrupt or discredit the elections. At the national level, the critical question of the military candidacy remains unresolved, with some signs of tension increasing among certain of the military. The electoral law is nearing completion as the Assembly discusses the draft law in plenary session. While in general the draft appears to be a satisfactory document from our point of view, provisions to ensure that the winner has a respectable mandate and provisions to ensure equal means for all candidates are weaker than we had hoped. Moreover, relations between the government and the Assembly are uncertain, with resentments and suspicions continuing on both sides. In I Corps, morale has improved since the additional American forces arrived, but there is still much anxiety there over the possibility of a major enemy thrust. The militant Buddhists so far have proved unable to find either the issue or the allies to make trouble. May Day was marked by orderly meetings, and the effort to turn the meetings into anti-government and anti-American demonstrations failed completely. The rebel Montagnard leader, Y Bham, finally came to Banmethuot to meet with GVN representatives, and a preliminary agreement was reached.

[Here follows detailed discussion of the Thieu-Ky rivalry, local elections, the electoral law, the situation in I Corps, the GVN's talks with Y Bham, Chieu Hoi, casualties, the South Vietnamese economy, the port problem, and the matter of wives of American personnel.]

H. Conclusion.

35. During all of the talks which I have had over this past week, in my briefings, and in the many contacts I have had with both our civilian and military personnel, some things have impressed me deeply.

² Dated April 28. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S)

³ In telegram 24286 from Saigon, April 28, Bunker described his first meeting with Ky, whom the Ambassador described as being "keenly aware of our desire to see the ARVN properly motivated" on pacification. (Ibid.)

I have found on the part of everyone with whom I have come in contact a universal spirit of cooperation, of dedication to the great effort in which we are engaged here, an awareness of its vital importance and a determination that we shall succeed. This is a heartening thing to experience and I wish that all our people at home could see and feel it. We have ability and talent here, we have conviction, and I have faith that we shall come through.

Bunker

159. Telegram From the White House to the Embassy in Vietnam¹

Washington, May 5, 1967, 1950Z.

CAP 67385. To Ambassador Bunker and Robert Komer from Walt Rostow.

The President wishes me to share thoughts which will be moving or have moved over parallel military channels at his instruction.

He wishes US military requirements to be recalculated by Westy after a most exhaustive effort to exploit fully the Vietnamese manpower pool. This includes not only engaging as many of those released from military services as can be induced to stay in functions relevant to total military manpower but also an examination of the possibilities of using Vietnamese and other non-Americans in functions which might release US military for combat tasks. This review should include all possible GVN military manpower policy revisions including age lowering, tour duty extensions, more effective draft system and further deserter reductions.

In this thorough comb-out you should engage the best manpower expert we can find, who may well be Ray Male. You will understand that, before a case can be made for additional US manpower, we must have an iron-clad case that the use of Vietnamese manpower is screwed up to the maximum.

Against this background you should also know that President is thinking in terms of asking our present fighting allies for increments in manpower on a basis proportional to population, to the extent that such an approach is realistic. Paramilitary and supply functions might enter into this community chest calculus.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXX. Top Secret; Literally Eyes Only; Via CAS Channel.

In addition, he is thinking of approaching the Malaysians, Indonesians, and even the GRC. In the latter case, of course, we would be seeking men for functions which would be least inflammatory. Through this channel and on a completely private basis, we would be interested in your observations on this approach and, in particular, what kinds of GRC manpower might conceivably be introduced in a way not merely acceptable to the GVN but with minimum noise in the international system.

Bill Leonhart is with me as I draft and fully informed.

More generally, you should know that, as he faces the months ahead, the President is counting primarily on the stability of the political track and palpable progress in pacification to do the trick.

New subject. The President just called and asked if Ambassador Bunker would get to Ky and tell him he, the President, would be grateful if Ky would not discuss in public additional manpower requirements for Viet Nam.

160. Telegram From the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Wheeler) to the Commander, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (Westmoreland) and the Commander in Chief, Pacific (Sharp)¹

Washington, May 5, 1967, 2201Z.

JCS 3332. 1. As you would expect, there has been a considerable exchange between the Secretary, White House and me concerning MACV's troop requirements for FY 68 and FY 69. This afternoon, Secretary McNamara asked me to transmit the following message to COMUSMACV:

To assist in the evaluation of your request for additional troops, please consider whether additional Vietnamese manpower could be recruited for combat or combat support tasks thereby reducing the need for US troops. For example, how many men would be added to South Vietnam's military forces if:

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Papers of William C. Westmoreland, History File, 1-31 May 67. Secret.

A. The tours of duty for ARVN, regional and popular forces personnel were extended one year;

B. The men separated from ARVN, regional and popular forces in 1964, 1965, 1966 and 1967 were returned to service;

C. The current draft age was reduced one year.

2. I suggest that you follow this guidance in transmitting your response:

A. Send it through the front channel identifying your reply as being answers to questions posed by me, presumably during our conferences here in Washington.

B. In addition to answering the questions as posed, please take into account equipment availabilities and other support which would be needed.

C. Costs to include any additional equipment required.

D. Impact, if any, on the Vietnamese labor force.

E. Any other pertinent factors.

3. FYI: The President wants Secretaries McNamara, Katzenbach and me to visit South Vietnam in June. As of now, earlier commitments by McNamara and Katzenbach indicate that the most likely time for a visit by us will be around 15 June. I emphasize that this is not a firm date but merely the best time I can fix on this far in advance. It will help both of you in planning your own activities.

Will advise.

Warm regards.

161. Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (McNaughton) to Secretary of Defense McNamara¹

Washington, May 6, 1967.

SUBJECT

My Comments on the 5 May "First Rough Draft"²

These comments are for your eyes only:

1. I am afraid there is the fatal flaw in the strategy in the draft. It is that the strategy falls into the trap that has ensnared us for the past

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Papers of Paul C. Warnke, McNaughton Files, McNTN III Drafts, 1967 (1). Top Secret; Sensitive.

² Reference is to an early draft of the Draft Presidential Memorandum by the ISA staff, not found. The May 19 draft memorandum to the President is Document 177.

three years. It actually *gives* the troops while only *praying* for their proper use and for constructive diplomatic action. Limiting the present decision to an 80,000 add-on does the very important business of postponing the issue of a Reserve call-up (and all of its horrible baggage), but postpone it is all that it does—probably to a worse time, 1968. Providing the 80,000 troops is tantamount to acceding to the whole Westmoreland–Sharp request. This being the case, they will “accept” the 80,000. But six months from now, in will come messages like the “470,000–570,000” messages, saying that the requirement remains at 201,000 (or more). Since no pressure will have been put on anyone, the military war will have gone on as before and no diplomatic progress will have been made. It follows that the “philosophy” of the war should be fought out now so everyone will not be proceeding on their own major premises, and getting us in deeper and deeper; at the very least, the President should give General Westmoreland his limit (as President Truman did to General MacArthur). That is, if General Westmoreland is to get 550,000 men, he should be told “that will be all, and we mean it.”

2. I think the paper underplays a little bit the unpopularity of the war in the US, especially with the young people, the underprivileged, the intelligentsia and (I suspect) the women. A feeling is widely and strongly held that “the Establishment” is out of its mind. The feeling is that we are trying to impose some US image on distant peoples we cannot understand (anymore than we can the younger generation here at home), and that we are carrying the thing to absurd lengths. Related to this feeling is the increased polarization that is taking place in the United States with seeds of the worst split in our people in more than a century. The King, Galbraith, etc., positions illustrate one near-pole; the Hebert and Rivers statements on May 5 about the need to disregard the First Amendment illustrate the other. In this connection, I fear that “natural selection” in this environment will lead the Administration itself to become more and more homogenized—Mac Bundy, George Ball, Bill Moyers are gone. Who next?

3. We should, as part of biting the bullet, decide that the US does not insist that the Congos, Bolivias, Greeces, and South Vietnams of the world must select their governments by elections. (Is it historically correct that only the highly industrialized nations have succeeded in using that process?) Specifically, I think we should recognize that civil wars are among the several ways that nations of cultures foreign to us employ to arrive at a government. We should obviously push for elections in Vietnam, but we should make clear that we do not rule out the bare-knuckle method if all else fails. This point is very pertinent in Vietnam because a fair election is totally unlikely and both sides know it. If we wait for an election to settle the issue there, we may never get out. And there is some merit to the position that the

prize should go to the fellow who can come out on top in the rough-and-tumble.

4. The paper still lacks a good, full scenario. It needs more work. Two examples of points not covered are (a) whether we want to see that the September Vietnamese presidential elections go one way or another, in furtherance of the strategy, and (b) how we generate and sustain domestic support in the US for the strategy.

5. A smaller point: The paper pussy-foots a little with respect to the "redefinition of 'success'." That is exactly what the strategy tries to do. Perhaps, as a matter of tactics, the President should figure it out for himself. This point ties in closely with the one made in paragraph 1 above regarding getting the "philosophy" of the war decided (to avoid another diplomatic default and military misuse of the forces).

John T. McNaughton³

³ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

162. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, May 6, 1967, 3 p.m.

Mr. President:

Herewith thoughts on the alternatives that face us in Viet Nam. First, a word about our general strategy:

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 2EE Primarily McNamara Recommendations. Top Secret. This memorandum was sent later in the day as telegram CAP 67400 to the President, who was at the LBJ Ranch in Texas May 4–8. Rostow sent the memorandum, with the first two sentences removed, to Rusk and members of Katzenbach's "Non-group" (a group that met on an unofficial basis): Katzenbach, Vance, McNaughton, Bundy, and Helms. The copy sent to Bundy is in the National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. The covering memorandum for that copy notes that it was to be discussed by the group on May 8. Notes of this meeting have not been found. McNamara and Goldberg also attended this meeting at the request of the President. In telegram 5244 from USUN, May 11, Goldberg offered reasons for his support of McNamara's proposal, since he believed that the latest escalation in bombing would cause the DRV "to overcome its reluctance to receive outside help and invite direct support from Communist China and sharp increase in sophisticated Sov aid." (Ibid.)

I. U.S. strategy in Viet Nam

We have been seeking to frustrate the effort by the Communists to take over South Viet Nam by defeating their main force units; attacking the guerrilla infrastructure; and building a South Vietnamese governmental and security structure—rural and urban—strong enough to stand on its feet as a reputable, independent nation.

To hasten the decision in Hanoi to abandon the aggression, we have been trying to do two other things:

- (i) to limit and harass infiltration; and
- (ii) to impose on the North sufficient military and civil cost to make them decide to get out of the war earlier rather than later.

We have never held the view that bombing could stop infiltration. We have never held the view that bombing of the Hanoi–Haiphong area alone would lead them to abandon the effort in the South. We have never held the view that bombing Hanoi–Haiphong would directly cut back infiltration. We have held the view that the degree of military and civilian cost felt in the North and the diversion of resources to deal with our bombing could contribute marginally—and perhaps significantly—to the timing of a decision to end the war. But it was no substitute for making progress in the South.

II. What we agree upon

At the moment only a limited part of that strategy is subject to debate. We all appear to agree:

—We must use maximum influence to achieve a smooth transition to constitutional government in South Viet Nam;

—We must continue to constrict and harass all the lines of infiltration of men and supplies;

—We must encourage the South Vietnamese to the most forthcoming posture possible towards those fighting with the Viet Cong in the South and look to reconciliation and, ultimately, negotiation among the South Vietnamese to help settle the war.

—We must carry forward pacification at the maximum possible pace, including especially the improvement in the quality of South Vietnamese efforts in this field.

III. Policy decisions in the area where we agree

In this agreed area of policy, our task is to do what we have been doing better and faster than in the past. In effect, this is the assignment we have given the new team of Bunker–Locke–Abrams–Komer.

So far as Washington is concerned, we face:

—The question of enlarging our own military manpower in Viet Nam and deciding, with the Saigon team, how best it should be disposed;

—Enlarging the contribution of military manpower from others;

—Taking a fresh high-level, coordinated look at all our measures to inhibit or harass interdiction, with an eye to making them more efficient; bombing in Route Packages 1 and 2; inhibiting infiltration of manpower in the western part of the DMZ; enlarging and making more efficient our efforts against the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos; doing more about the flow of supplies from Cambodia; improving, if possible, the naval blockade;

—Pressing Ky to seek to defect high-level Viet Cong figures, and to consider more explicit offers about future political possibilities for those now fighting with the Viet Cong, within the framework of the constitution, both in the rural areas and in national politics.

IV. Policy issues in contention: Choices in bombing the North

Essentially there are three strategies we might pursue in bombing the North. I shall try to assess in each case the advantages and the risks:

A. Closing the top of the funnel²

Under this strategy we would mine the major harbors and, perhaps, bomb port facilities and even consider blockade. In addition, we would attack systematically the rail lines between Hanoi and mainland China. At the moment the total import capacity into North Viet Nam is about 17,200 tons per day. Even with expanded import requirements due to the food shortage, imports are, in fact, coming in at about 5700 tons per day. It is possible with a concerted and determined effort that we could cut back import capacity somewhat below the level of requirements; but this is not sure. On the other hand, it would require a difficult and sustained effort by North Viet Nam and its allies to prevent a reduction in total imports below requirements if we did all these things.

The costs would be these:

—The Soviet Union would have to permit a radical increase in Hanoi's dependence upon Communist China, or introduce minesweepers, etc., to keep its supplies coming into Hanoi by sea;

—The Chinese Communists would probably introduce many more engineering and anti-aircraft forces along the roads and rail lines between Hanoi and China in order to keep the supplies moving;

² The funnel referred to the long and narrow mid-part of Vietnam. Bombing Routes I and II were in the southern part of North Vietnam, III and IV in the central territory of the DRV, V encompassed the northwestern part of the country, and VI the northeast portion that included restricted zones over Hanoi and Haiphong. There was a separate route for Laos.

—To maintain its prestige, in case it could not or would not open up Hanoi–Haiphong in the face of mines, the Soviet Union might contemplate creating a Berlin crisis. With respect to a Berlin crisis, they would have to weigh the possible split between the U. S. and its Western European allies under this pressure against damage to the atmosphere of détente in Europe which is working in favor of the French Communist Party and providing the Soviet Union with generally enlarged influence in Western Europe.

I myself do not believe that the Soviet Union would go to war with us over Viet Nam unless we sought to occupy North Viet Nam; and, even then, a military response from Moscow would not be certain.

With respect to Communist China, it always has the option of invading Laos and Thailand; but this would not be a rational response to naval and air operations designed to strangle Hanoi. A war throughout Southeast Asia would not help Hanoi; although I do believe Communist China would fight us if we invaded the northern part of North Viet Nam.

One can always take the view that, given the turmoil inside Communist China, an irrational act by Peiping is possible. And such irrationality cannot be ruled out.

I conclude that if we try to close the top of the funnel, tension between ourselves and the Soviet Union and Communist China would increase; if we were very determined, we could impose additional burdens on Hanoi and its allies; we might cut capacity below requirements; and the outcome is less likely to be a general war than more likely.

B. Attacking what is inside the funnel

This is what we have been doing in the Hanoi–Haiphong area for some weeks. I do not agree with the view that the attacks on Hanoi–Haiphong have no bearing on the war in the South. They divert massive amounts of resources, energies, and attention to keeping the civil and military establishment going. They impose general economic, political, and psychological difficulties on the North which have been complicated this year by a bad harvest and food shortages. I do not believe that they “harden the will of the North.” In my judgment, up to this point, our bombing of the North has been a painful additional cost they have thus far been willing to bear to pursue their efforts in the South.

On the other hand:

—There is no direct, immediate connection between bombing the Hanoi–Haiphong area and the battle in the South;

—If we complete the attack on electric power by taking out the Hanoi station—which constitutes about 80% of the electric power supply of the country now operating—we will have hit most of the tar-

gets whose destruction imposes serious military-civil costs on the North.

—With respect to risk, it is unclear whether Soviet warnings about our bombing Hanoi–Haiphong represent decisions already taken or decisions which might be taken if we persist in banging away in that area.

It is my judgment that the Soviet reaction will continue to be addressed to the problem imposed on Hanoi by us; that is, they might introduce Soviet pilots as they did in the Korean War; they might bring ground-to-ground missiles into North Viet Nam with the object of attacking our vessels at sea and our airfields in the Danang area.

I do not believe that the continuation of attacks at about the level we have been conducting them in the Hanoi–Haiphong area will lead to pressure on Berlin or a general war with the Soviet Union. In fact, carefully read, what the Soviets have been trying to signal is: Keep away from our ships; we may counter-escalate to some degree; but we do not want a nuclear confrontation over Viet Nam.

C. Concentration in Route Packages 1 and 2

The advantages of concentrating virtually all our attacks in this area are three:

- We would cut our loss rate in pilots and planes;
- We would somewhat improve our harassment of infiltration of South Viet Nam;
- We would diminish the risks of counter-escalatory action by the Soviet Union and Communist China, as compared with courses A and B.

V. Recommendations

I do not recommend at this time course A: closing the top of the funnel. The returns do not, on present evidence, seem high enough to justify the risks of Soviet and Chinese countermeasures and heightened world tensions. On the other hand, I do not believe it would lead to general war; and in this judgment I believe I am supported by the conclusions of the intelligence community.

It is a course of action which, if undertaken, should be pursued with great determination and against a background of highly mobilized U. S. strength so that Moscow and Peiping would be forced to decide whether it wished to take on total U.S. strength or bring about an early end to the war. While, as I say, I would not recommend it, it is a line of policy which deserves the most careful and professional staffing out in the government, perhaps for later application.

With respect to course B, I believe we have achieved greater results in increasing the pressure on Hanoi and raising the cost of their continuing to conduct the aggression in the South than some of my most respected colleagues would agree. I do not believe we should

lightly abandon what we have accomplished; and specifically, I believe we should mount the most economical and careful attack on the Hanoi power station our air tacticians can devise. Moreover, I believe we should keep open the option of coming back to the Hanoi–Haiphong area, depending upon what we learn of their repair operations; what Moscow’s and Peiping’s reactions are; and especially, when we understand better what effects we have and have not achieved thus far.

I believe the Soviet Union may well have taken certain countersteps addressed to the more effective protection of the Hanoi–Haiphong area and may have decided—or could shortly decide—to introduce into North Viet Nam some surface-to-surface missiles.

With respect to option C, I believe we should, while keeping open the B option, concentrate our attacks to the maximum in Route Packages 1 and 2; and, in conducting Hanoi–Haiphong attacks, we should do so only when the targets make sense. I do not expect dramatic results from increasing the weight of attack in Route Packages 1 and 2; but I believe we are wasting a good many pilots in the Hanoi–Haiphong area without commensurate results. The major objectives of maintaining the B option can be achieved at lower cost.

The turn-around in policy can be managed, over a period of some weeks, in the context of Buddha’s birthday, etc., fairly easily; but if we get no diplomatic response in that period—and I do not expect one—and if we set aside option A (closing the top of the funnel), we shall have to devise a way of presenting our total policy in Viet Nam in a manner which is consistent with diminished attacks in the Hanoi–Haiphong area; which is honest; and which is acceptable to our own people. Surfacing the concept of the barrier may be critical to that turn-around, as will be other measures to tighten infiltration, an improved ARVN effort in pacification, and the provision of additional allied forces to permit Westy to get on with our limited but real role in pacification—notably, with the defense of I Corps and the hounding of provincial main force units.

Air field attacks are only appropriate to the kind of sustained operations in the Hanoi–Haiphong area associated with option A.

Walt

163. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State ¹

Saigon, May 7, 1967, 1320Z.

24952. 1. There have been a number of highly important developments with respect to the military candidate for President and the future political role of the Vietnamese military which have occurred within the last 48 hours. Although the situation is not yet fully clear, certain facts have emerged from several accounts we have had.

2. There appears to have been another meeting among a number of top Generals on Friday, May 5, at which it was decided that General Thang should ask General Thieu to agree to withdraw from the Presidential race. Thang saw Thieu and the latter refused simply to withdraw and said he would make his final decision at some time closer to the deadline provided for the final selection of candidates, i.e. early July. There had been earlier reports from General Cao Van Vien that the candidacy question was not approaching resolution and that tensions were rising among the top military leaders which might lead to serious difficulties and destroy military unity beyond repair.

3. Following the Thieu–Thang meeting the latter flew to Da Nang on May 6 to join number of other Generals (presumably including those present on May 5) and to report on his talk. From our information at least the following Generals were present at the Da Nang meeting: Ky, Thang, Tri, Booh Viens (C/S and Security), Lam (I Corps) and Vinh Loc (II Corps). After lengthy discussion of the situation a decision was reached to announce that there would be no military candidate as such for the Presidency and the military would eschew participation in the Presidential and legislative elections as a unified bloc behind a candidate or candidates. Each military man would vote as he saw fit and the military command structure would not be employed for direct political purposes. C/S Vien was reportedly charged with formulating and announcing this decision.

4. At the same meeting, with this decision in hand and with knowledge of Thieu's refusal to withdraw from the race Prime Minis-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Immediate; Nodis. Received at 10:28 a.m. Rostow sent the telegram "Eyes Only" to the President at the LBJ Ranch as CAP 67407, May 7, where it was received at 3:02 p.m. A notation indicates that the President saw the telegram. Rostow prefaced the body of the cable with the following: "You will be interested in the following Nodis from Saigon which describes the latest on the political front. We will underline again the importance of the military staying together." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, NODIS Vol. VI)

ter Ky made known his intention to present himself as candidate for President and to announce his candidacy promptly.

5. At my request General Westmoreland had a lengthy conversation Sunday morning, May 7, with General Thieu. After some discussion of his trip to the US and of the important tasks that lay ahead, General Westmoreland said that he had been struck by the vital importance placed by American opinion in the continuation of the political progress already achieved and of the stability that Vietnam had experienced for almost two years. He added that a second vital need in the future, from both an American and Vietnamese viewpoint, was the training and direction of the ARVN to carry on the many major tasks that it must successfully execute in providing security and continuing progress in the revolutionary development field. Westmoreland said Vietnam needed its best military leader at the head of the ARVN for these purposes and added that in his opinion Thieu was the man. Thieu said he agreed.

6. Thieu then elaborated at some length on how he saw things during the critical months ahead. He considered national unity and common purpose as the primary requirements and he thought regional differences should be put into the background. He believed that to meet these purposes a civilian President probably was needed. He believed Tran Van Huong was the strongest candidate and the one who could best pull the country together, since he was a Southerner and a respected leader. Thieu did not discuss his own role specifically beyond his earlier agreement that he was the General best qualified to lead the armed forces.²

7. *Comment:* It is evident that the military leadership had been unable to find a way to break the impasse between Ky and Thieu except by trying to get Thieu to withdraw. They feared that failure to resolve the matter would lead to even more bitter rivalry and might rapidly undermine military unity and morale fatally. Faced with Thieu's refusal to withdraw and Ky's obvious intention to run, a decision that the military forces should not participate as a unified bloc in the political process ahead seemed the best way out. It provided a face-saving formula for Thieu not to have to take a public decision at this time and for Ky to announce his candidacy. On the part of certain of the Generals it no doubt represented a genuine desire to keep the army free from the political struggle and free to pursue its own important objectives.

² In telegram 24732 from Saigon, May 4, the Embassy reported that Thieu told Foreign Minister Do that he would step aside if the Americans wanted a civilian President. The Embassy believed that the remark was "another effort to smoke out American views regarding the Presidential election." (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S)

8. The actual effect of this papering-over process remains to be seen. It may only put off the day when the political rivalry between Thieu and Ky will have to be faced and when the unity of the armed forces may again be subjected to severe strain. For example, if Ky mounts an effective campaign, as he is already doing, and allies himself with some powerful civilian support, Thieu may then decide that he should align himself with a civilian candidate or even declare himself as a candidate. In either case the military will be faced with a choice and may be divided into competing factions once again.

9. On the other hand, if General Vien can effectively prevent the military command structure from becoming deeply engaged in the election process and if the province chief–district chief military hierarchy can be politically sterilized in the months ahead, then it might be possible to prevent the military from becoming directly engaged. Recent Vietnamese political history does not inspire much confidence that such a powerful political element as the armed forces can be made political at a time when the biggest prize is at stake. If this could be achieved without nullifying the important stabilizing role which the military has played and must continue to play, it would be a highly desirable goal. In any case, these most recent developments should give us some time to see how the picture is most likely to emerge and what role we should play in it.

Bunker

164. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam¹

Washington, May 7, 1967, 3:03 p.m.

189491. Do not deliver to Ambassador Bunker before 7 A.M. Ref: Saigon's 24952.²

Your comments reftel reflect fundamental point that also pre-occupies us in present unsettled political situation and especially in connection events you have just reported. This is basic requirement that unity of armed forces be preserved so that military effort not be jeop-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Nodis; Immediate. Drafted and approved by Unger and cleared by Jorden.

² Document 163.

ardized and so that orderly process of government not be upset. We cannot accept renewed squabbling among the generals with the undermining of support here which would inevitably follow.

Having said this, we of course recognize that actions taken by Ky-Thang group may have been only way to avoid immediate military split growing out of Ky-Thieu impasse and we heartily agree with desirability disengaging military from election process and politics in general. If your assessment of unfolding events encourages you to believe that in their unique Vietnamese way the military are prepared to move this way without nullifying their stabilizing role, then this is trend to be encouraged. (Even if this should be true, however, we cannot imagine that Ky, or Loan acting for him, will fail to exploit at least some of governmental-military machinery.)

Westmoreland's visit to Thieu will no doubt convey to Thieu that US favors his not participating in elections and, by implication, that we favor Ky at least as between Thieu and Ky. Thieu's attitude surely is key factor in keeping military together and therefore suggest you consider urging Ky to make contemplated announcement about military non-involvement in elections only after having informed Thieu, perhaps in person, and sought his concurrence or at least acquiescence in this. To extent possible would also seem wise for Ky and his group to contact in same manner other military not in his group.

Finally, several further questions:

1. What relation might recent events have to Loan visit here? Was he bringing word of coming events to Bui Diem or did Ky wish to have him out of town in tricky period? We will be in touch with Diem to try to pick up any hints.

2. Is there any possibility that Ky might team up with some respected civilian figure, such as Huong? We have some sympathy with Thieu's observation (para 6 reftel) that civilian may have better chance achieving national unity and common purpose and consider that even if this is not in the cards a strong mixed civilian-military ticket would have great value.

3. What is status of two announcements mentioned reftel? We have thus far (2:30 p.m. Washington time) picked up nothing on tickers or otherwise.

4. Occurs to us it might be useful, if you concur, to have Gen. Westmoreland return to Thieu at appropriate time and underline what he has said (para 5 reftel) about Thieu role in making ARVN first-class force and make clear our readiness help out however useful.

Rusk

165. Letter From the Ambassador to the Soviet Union (Thompson) to the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Rostow)¹

Moscow, May 8, 1967.

Dear Gene:

I was glad to have your thoughtful letter of May 1.² I have of course been giving a great deal of thought to the problems you raise and would like to give you my frank views.

In the first place, I think you give somewhat too much weight to the Korean precedent. I was not involved in that affair, but there are obvious differences between that situation and the Vietnam affair; e.g., I might mention the change in the relationship between the Soviet Union and Communist China. I think also the fact that in the case of Korea, the Soviets in the position of bucking the UN made considerable difference.

I think it is true that the fact that so many of our peace moves coincided with an escalation of our attacks against North Vietnam has caused the Soviets to wonder if our peace initiatives are not a cover for actions designed to achieve a military victory. I also believe they think that one of the motives of our moves toward détente is to exacerbate their quarrel with Communist China.

You suggest both a warning and an offer. To take the offer first, God knows we have made it clear to the Soviets that we are prepared to negotiate, and the only new factor which you suggest is an expression of our willingness to jointly guarantee a settlement. In the first place, I think the present situation is such that the Soviets would not believe us and, in the second place, I can see great difficulties both for the Soviets and ourselves. For them this means openly joining with us in a move largely directed against Communist China. While they would have no regard for how the Chinese might receive this, it would cause problems for them with the rest of the Communist world. Moreover, the Soviet objective is surely a Communist North and South Vietnam not dominated by China and, to the extent that the settlement left South Vietnam free, the guarantee would work against Soviet interests. So far as we are concerned, if we ever succeed in disengaging ourselves militarily, I would hate to see us committed to come back if the settlement

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Official–Informal.

² In his letter to Thompson, Eugene Rostow urged that bombing be restricted to infiltration routes in order to avoid the risk of forcing a confrontation with the Soviet Union. He recalled the efforts of both Soviet and U.S. diplomats to end the hostilities in Korea and suggested that a like collaboration could occur with respect to Vietnam. (Ibid.)

were violated. For both of us there would be the problem of establishing when a violation had occurred. If it did occur, it would undoubtedly be by North Vietnamese support for Viet Cong elements in the South, and this would be very hard to establish.

This brings me to the subject of the settlement itself. Perhaps there have been some decisions in Washington of which I am not aware, but if the North Vietnamese did agree to negotiations, I cringe to think of what our position would be on the role of the NLF. Unless they were brought into the Government in some way, I think we would be even worse off in world opinion than we are now, and Ky's position seems to me tenable only in the event that we have achieved a military victory. It seems to me that you are suggesting that we agree to guarantee a settlement, the nature of which we do not know, and in short my view is that any settlement we could achieve now would be one which I would hate to see us have to guarantee. Despite the foregoing objections, I can see that at some stage we might sound the Soviets out on this, but I think surely it would have to be a guarantee in which others, and probably the UN, were involved.

I feel much more strongly about the warning. In the first place, the Soviets are well aware of the risks involved in the continuation of the present situation. You suggest it would not be difficult to work out a formula for a warning, but I can myself think of none that would be effective which would not be taken by them as a threat, and if there is one thing I have learned about this place it is that they react badly to threats. They should never be made unless we mean them and, because of their great inferiority complex, threats tend to make them dig in all the deeper.

It is clear that Dobrynin was brought back here in connection with a top level review of Soviet-American relations and particularly the Vietnam affair. I do not know what the outcome will be, but I suspect that as a minimum they will increase the quality and quantity of their military aid.

It seems to me that the most dangerous period will be when we really begin to win. At this time, the North Vietnamese will have to decide whether to negotiate or to cash the blank check which the Communist countries gave them in the Bucharest Declaration, that is to call for volunteers. They would be most reluctant to do this, because it would mean undoubtedly bringing in Chinese volunteers as well and they would have the problem of getting the Chinese out, but if the Chinese were balanced by Soviets and East European Communist forces, the North Vietnamese might hope to succeed in this. My present guess is that they would negotiate, but I worry that the odds are not very great, and I am afraid that our increased bombing is turning them against us.

The Danish Ambassador tells me that in saying goodbye to Chen Yi when leaving China about six months ago where he had been stationed, Chen Yi told him there were only three cases in which China would intervene in Vietnam: one was an attack on China, the second was the imminence of the downfall of a Communist regime in North Vietnam, and the third was an invasion of North Vietnam.

You have doubtless seen the INR study which gives greater credence than formerly to the view that the Soviets may prefer the continuance of the Vietnamese war to a settlement.³ I still think the Soviets would like to see it settled, but I agree that this has recently become less clear than formerly. They appear to be tempted by the possibility of getting us out of Europe and breaking up NATO, and may well believe that our involvement in Vietnam contributes to this objective. Moreover, they are certainly aware of the damage to our image around the world. While they do not want a confrontation with us, they can always use the excuse that the Chinese made it impossible for the Communist countries, including the Soviet Union, to render effective aid.

My own view is that neither the Soviets nor the North Vietnamese hold the key to this situation. The Soviets do not want to take the blame for any settlement that would be acceptable to us, as this would greatly enhance the standing of the Chinese Communists in the whole area at their expense. Similarly, the North Vietnamese will not want to pull the rug out from under the Viet Cong. They have made enormous sacrifices in this affair, and if they move before the Viet Cong are willing to settle, they will have jeopardized their own position in South Vietnam. It seems to me therefore that the NLF and the Viet Cong constitute the key factor and I am afraid that the only satisfactory solution is for us to continue and step up our efforts in the South, although this involves heavy sacrifices on our part. I certainly do not think that the Soviets would be willing to cut off supplies in order to bring pressure on North Vietnam for fear that this would mean handing over North Vietnam to the Chinese. As long as our main effort is confined to the South, I think there is little risk of Soviet intervention and I only wish that we could have levelled off our bombing in the North sometime ago, and even better to have confined it to the southern part of North Vietnam, although I realize the pressures on the President from the military and others. I wish I could be more optimistic, but this is the way it looks to me.

Sincerely,

Tommy

³ Not further identified.

166. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, May 9, 1967, 0410Z.

25112. Reference: State 189491.²

1. I do not believe it would be useful at this time for General Westmoreland to return to this subject with General Thieu. He spent two hours with him Sunday³ and they went over the ground thoroughly. General Westmoreland concurs with this judgment.

2. I will be seeing Thieu and Ky, separately, Tuesday to introduce Ambassador Locke and will see what, if anything, they may have to say on the subject.⁴ As reported separately, General Cao Van Vien informed the ARVN staff the morning of May 8 about the decision that ARVN would not appoint a military man as its candidate for President and gave an interview to Vietnam press shortly thereafter. General Westmoreland saw General Vien afternoon May 8 and Vien stated that the proposal to divorce the armed forces from the political campaign had originated with him and he intended to follow through on it. We have no additional information at this time regarding the timing of Prime Minister Ky's announcement of his candidacy.

3. It is difficult to speculate on the possible relationship of these events to Loan's visit to Washington. It is conceivable that he was bringing some word from Ky to Bui Diem about Ky's intentions but since events did not transpire as originally hoped and they could not be clearly foreseen, it does not seem likely this was a primary reason for his trip. We know that Loan's manner and tactics have irritated several of the top Generals in the past and it is therefore at least conceivable that Ky wished to have him away during the rather delicate meetings among the Generals and the subsequent talk with

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Priority; Nodis. Received at 1:54 a.m.

² Document 164.

³ May 7.

⁴ Bunker and Locke met with both men on May 9. In telegram 25083 from Saigon, May 9, the Ambassador reported that Thieu concurred in the ARVN's declaration that it would not support a military candidate. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S) In telegram 25233 from Saigon, May 10, Bunker reported that in spite of his support of the declaration, Ky told him that he would run for the Presidency since he believed that he could best lead South Vietnam's social revolution. Ky also said that he had informed Thieu that morning of his plan to run. Thieu told Ky that he might retire or return to active duty in the army; Thieu agreed in any event that the military should remain united in the coming contest. (Ibid.)

Thieu. In any event, it continues to seem likely that Loan's activities with Bui Diem will be related to seeking support in one form or another for Ky's candidacy, or at least the impression of support (Saigon 24733).⁵

4. We would imagine that Ky hopes to team up with some respected southern civilian figure who will bring in votes and Huong would obviously be the strongest combination with him. As the Department knows, there have been reports of soundings between Huong and Ky. We suspect that the question of any such combination, whether Huong-Ky or Ky-Huong, will not be settled for some time. (See our A-638 pouched Department May 8, which assessed Presidential candidates prior to these most recent developments.)⁶

5. We agree that a strong mixed civilian-military ticket would have great value and will be following events with this thought very much in mind.

Bunker

⁵ Dated May 4. (Ibid.)

⁶ Dated May 5. (Ibid.)

167. National Security Action Memorandum No. 362¹

Washington, May 9, 1967.

MEMORANDUM TO

The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense

SUBJECT

Responsibility for U.S. Role in Pacification (Revolutionary Development)

U.S. civil/military responsibility for support of Pacification (Revolutionary Development) in Viet Nam will be integrated under a single manager concept to provide added thrust forward in this critical field.²

Because the bulk of the people and resources involved are military, COMUSMACV will be charged with this responsibility in Viet Nam, under the overall authority of the Ambassador.

To carry out these responsibilities, under COMUSMACV, Mr. Robert W. Komer will be appointed Deputy for Pacification (Revolutionary Development) with personal rank of ambassador.

To this end the present functions and personnel of the Office of Civil Operations of the U. S. Mission will become a part of MACV. For the time being its civilian components will continue to be supported with funds, personnel, and other requirements by the civil agencies involved, such as State, AID, USIA, CIA, and Department of Agriculture. COMUSMACV is expected to call on these agencies, as well as the rel-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 273, National Security Action Memorandums (NSAM), NSAM 362. Confidential.

² Bunker wanted to keep this announcement "in low key" by including it in a press conference on personnel changes in the Mission's organization. Discussion of the announcement is in telegrams 25028 and 25029 from Saigon, May 8 (both *ibid.*, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S) and telegram CAP 67411 from Rostow to the President, May 8. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, NODIS Vol. VI) Regarding Bunker's press conference, held on May 11, see footnote 3, Document 150. Komer received a report on May 9 asserting that the takeover of OCO's functions had been leaked "to force quick resolution of the situation in a favorable way." Speculation abounded that a significant number of civilians associated with the program would resign, and new hires would be difficult to find. (Center for Military History, DepCORDS/MACV Files, Organization (CORDS/MACCORDS General): 1966–68) The President later told reporter Keyes Beech of the *Chicago Daily News* that even though he had given Westmoreland greater authority over pacification for "maximum efficiency," Bunker remained "still in charge" of all aspects of the Vietnam Mission. (Memorandum of conversation, May 13; Johnson Library, White House Central Files, Subject File, GC-1, Notes on Meeting—President 1967)

evant military agencies, for all resources needed for accomplishment of his mission. I hereby charge all U. S. departments and agencies with meeting these requirements promptly and effectively.

One purpose of unifying responsibility for Pacification (RD) under COMUSMACV is to permit logistic and administrative economies through consolidation and cross-servicing. I expect sensible steps to be taken in this direction. Any inter-agency jurisdictional or other issues which may arise in country will be referred to the U. S. Ambassador.

Ambassador William Leonhart will assume from Mr. Komer the Washington supervisory responsibilities already assigned in NSAM 343,³ and will be appointed Special Assistant to the President for this purpose.

This new organizational arrangement represents an unprecedented melding of civil and military responsibilities to meet the overriding requirements of Viet Nam. Therefore, I count on all concerned—in Washington and in Viet Nam—to pull together in the national interest to make this arrangement work.

Lyndon B. Johnson

³ In NSAM No. 343, March 28, 1966, the President appointed Komer as his Special Assistant to coordinate and supervise the non-military programs in Vietnam. For text, see *Foreign Relations*, 1964–1968, vol. IV, Document 102.

168. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, May 9, 1967, 11 a.m.

Mr. President:

This is an interim report on the meeting yesterday afternoon of the Katzenbach group. We considered policy towards bombing the North.

1. I will be sending up to you later today papers by Cy Vance and Bill Bundy.² You already received at the Ranch the paper I filed with this group.³ The objective of submitting the three papers will be to let

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Walt Rostow, Viet Nam—W.W. Rostow (2 of 2). Top Secret.

² Documents 169 and 170.

³ Document 162.

you get a feeling for thought on the bombing problem as a preliminary to receiving definitive recommendations from Secretaries Rusk and McNamara.

2. All three papers reject mining Haiphong and the other harbors at this time as well as systematic attacks on the supply lines to China. All also recommend an increased concentration on Route Packages 1, 2 and 3—the latter included because of its relevance to Communist supply routes to Laos. All three papers recommend that we keep open the option of bombing in the Hanoi/Haiphong area—and continue some bombing there—but let the weight of that attack be determined by careful damage assessment of the targets we have already attacked, plus information on repair, etc.

3. All, I believe, will recommend that we strike the Hanoi electric power plant.

4. All address in one way or another the problem of making this shift in emphasis and the relative weight of our attack acceptable to our own public and the world; but I do not believe we have yet developed for you the best scenario.

5. Drawing back from these particular views, I believe what has happened is something like this:

—We expanded our target lists in the Hanoi/Haiphong area. CINCPAC, feeling a general go-ahead, began to propose targets which had two characteristics: they were either increasingly unimportant in relation to the losses sustained, or they began to foreshadow the mining of the ports and the cutting of supplies from China.

—Sect. Rusk began to worry about the Soviet and Chinese Communist reaction to what was happening and, especially, to what was projected.

—Sect. McNamara, who does not feel bombing in Hanoi/Haiphong relates directly to the war in the South, became increasingly uneasy and felt that rational control over targeting was getting out of his hands.

6. At bottom, the problem is the limited number of first-class targets in the North unless we go for a blockade of the harbors and the attempt to cut the railroad lines to China.

7. As I say, the weight of opinion outside the JCS is that we now draw a line on going forward on the CINCPAC list; but that we do so without abandoning attacks in the Hanoi/Haiphong area except as part of a compensated deal. I believe there is also agreement that we apply tougher criteria to such attacks in the future if for no other reason than because we lose about five times as many pilots and planes per 1000 sorties in that area as we do in the southern part of North Viet Nam.

8. As for the turn-around, it can be done slowly or sharply: we could continue to hit a good many targets in the Hanoi/Haiphong area without “escalating,” or markedly cut-back. But, I repeat, I don’t think

we have yet provided you with the best rationale and scenario for a shift from one bombing posture in the North to another. We will all be giving further thought to that in the days ahead.

9. One further thought: there is just enough suggestion that they might be hurting badly in the North that I have asked Dick Helms to answer the question: If we cut back now, would we be relieving pressure which, if sustained, might force a decision in a matter of weeks? I suspect the answer will be “no”; but, within the limits of objective intelligence, I would wish us to be sure.⁴

W.W.R.⁵

⁴ For the views of Helms and the CIA on this issue, see Document 180.

⁵ Printed from a copy that bears these typed initials.

169. **Memorandum From Secretary of Defense McNamara and the Deputy Secretary of Defense (Vance) to President Johnson¹**

Washington, May 9, 1967.

SUBJECT

Proposed Bombing Program Against North Vietnam

1. We face the question whether to continue the program of air attacks in the Hanoi–Haiphong area or for an indefinite period to concentrate all attacks on the lines of communications in the lower half of North Vietnam (south of 20°).

2. In the northern areas, we have struck the POL targets, steel plant, cement plant, and (with one exception—which we recommend be attacked) all of the major thermal power plants. As General Wheeler said when General Westmoreland was here, “The bombing campaign is reaching the point where we will have struck all worthwhile fixed

¹ Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, McNamara Files: FRC 71 A 3470, Service and JCS Recommendations re Bombing of DRV. Top Secret; Sensitive. Drafted by McNaughton. Rostow sent a copy of this memorandum, his earlier memorandum (Document 168), and Bundy’s memorandum (Document 170) to the President on the evening of May 9. The notation “L” indicates the President saw the memoranda. (Memorandum from Rostow to Johnson, May 9; Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 2 EE Primarily McNamara Recommendations re Strategic Actions) McNaughton drafted an earlier version of this same memorandum on May 5. (Memorandum from McNamara to the President, May 5; *ibid.*, Files of Walt Rostow, Viet Nam—W.W. Rostow)

targets except the ports."² We do not believe ports now should be struck nor closed by mining because of the confrontation this might cause with the Soviet Union.

3. We have the alternative open to us of continuing to conduct attacks between 20–23°—that is, striking minor fixed targets (like battery, fertilizer, and rubber plants and barracks) while conducting armed reconnaissance against movement on roads, railroads, and waterways. This course, however, is costly in American lives and involves serious dangers of escalation: The loss rate in Hanoi–Haiphong Route Package 6, for example, is more than six times the loss rate in the southernmost Route Packages 1 and 2; and actions in the Hanoi–Haiphong area involve serious risks of generating confrontations with the Soviet Union and China, both because they involve destruction of MIGs on the ground and encounters with MIGs in the air and because they may be construed as a U.S. intention to crush the Hanoi regime.

4. The military gain from destruction of additional military targets north of 20° will be slight. If we believed that air attacks in that area would change Hanoi's will, they might be worth the added loss of American life and the risks of expansion of the war. However, there is no evidence that this will be the case, while there is considerable evidence that such bombing will strengthen Hanoi's will. In this connection, Consul-General Rice (in Hong Kong 7581 of May 1)³ said what we believe to be the case—that we cannot by bombing reach the critical level of pain in North Vietnam and that, "below that level, pain only increases the will to fight." Sir Robert Thompson, who was a key officer in the British success in Malaya, said here on April 28 that our bombing—particularly in the Red River basin—"is unifying North Vietnam."⁴

5. Nor is bombing in the northern area necessary to maintain the morale of the South Vietnamese or of the American fighting men. While General Westmoreland has fully supported attacks against targets in the Hanoi–Haiphong area and has said that he is "frankly dismayed at even the thought of stopping the bombing program," his basic requirement has been continuation of attacks in what he calls the "extended battle zone" near the DMZ.

6. We, therefore, recommend that all of the sorties allocated to the Rolling Thunder program be concentrated on the lines of communications—the "funnel" through which men and supplies to the South must flow—between 17–20°, reserving the option and intention to strike (in the 20–23° area) as necessary to keep the enemy's investment in defense and in repair crews high throughout the country.

² For the meeting with Westmoreland, see Document 149.

³ Document 153.

⁴ As reported in *The New York Times*, April 29, 1967.

7. This proposed policy would not be done for the purpose of getting Hanoi to change its ways or to negotiate. But to optimize the chances of a favorable Hanoi reaction, the scenario should be (a) to inform the Soviets quietly (on May 15) that within a few (5) days the policy would be implemented, stating no time limits and making no promises not to return to the Red River basin to attack targets which later acquired military importance, and then (b) to make an unhuckstered shift as predicted on May 20. We would expect Moscow to pass the May 15 information on to Hanoi, perhaps (but probably not) urging Hanoi to seize the opportunity to de-escalate the war by talks or otherwise. Hanoi, not having been asked a question by us and having no ultimatum-like time limit, might be in a better posture to react favorably than has been the case in the past. Nevertheless, no favorable response from Hanoi should be expected, and the change in policy is not based on any such expectation.

8. Publicly, when the shift had become obvious (May 21 or 22), we should explain (a) that as we have always said, the war must be won in the South, (b) that we have never said bombing of the North would produce a settlement by breaking Hanoi's will or by shutting off the flow of supplies, (c) that the North must pay a price for its infiltration, (d) that the major northern military targets have been destroyed, (e) that now we are concentrating on the narrow neck through which supplies must flow, believing that the concentrated effort there, as compared with a dispersed effort throughout North Vietnam, under present circumstances will increase the efficiency of our interdiction effort, and (f) that we may have to return to targets further north if military considerations require it.

RSM

CRV

170. Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (Bundy)¹

Washington, May 9, 1967.

BOMBING STRATEGY OPTIONS FOR THE REST OF 1967

This memorandum lays out the major options that appear to exist for bombing strategy in the rest of 1967. It does so in terms of (a) a rough definition of target categories; (b) a statement of optional strategies; (c) a discussion of factors relevant to choice of strategy; and (d) a summary evaluation and recommendation.

Obviously, bombing strategy cannot be considered in isolation from over-all strategy decisions. This memorandum assumes that there is general agreement on pressing forward in all possible ways with pacification, political progress in the South, and military pressures in the South. It recognizes that there remains the problem of major possible force increases, and this is not addressed.

Intelligence conclusions in this memorandum have been reviewed by Mr. Helms, Ambassador Kohler, and China experts in the State Department. The arguments and final recommendation reflect the views of Messrs. Katzenbach, Helms, and William Bundy. The memorandum as a whole is designed to be read alongside the memorandums by Mr. Vance and Mr. Rostow,² and to discuss in more depth the factors that have led to an essentially similar conclusion and recommendation.

Target Categories

There are four broad target categories that can be combined to produce options.

1. *"Concentration on supply routes."* This would comprise attacks on supply routes in the southern "bottleneck" areas of North Vietnam, from the 20th parallel south.

2. *"Limited Re-strikes."* This would comprise limited attacks on targets already hit, including unless otherwise stated sensitive targets north of the 20th parallel and in and around Hanoi/Haiphong, which were hit in the last three weeks.

3. *"Continued Hammering north of the 20th parallel."* This would comprise a few additional targets and a major and systematic program

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 2EE Primarily McNamara Recommendations re Strategic Actions. Top Secret.

² Documents 169 and 168, respectively. Rostow sent all of these memoranda to the President on the evening of May 9. See footnote 1, Document 169.

of re-strikes on targets already hit, including sensitive targets in and around Hanoi/Haiphong.

4. "*Extremely sensitive targets.*" This would comprise targets that are exceptionally sensitive, in terms of Chinese and/or Soviet reaction, as well as domestic and international factors. For example, this list would include mining of Haiphong, bombing of critical port facilities in Haiphong, and bombing of dikes and dams not directly related to supply route waterways and/or involving heavy flooding to crops. Some of these targets would relate to a systematic attempt to deal with the sea and rail routes into North Vietnam; other targets—such as the Red River bridge and the Phuc Yen airfield—have strong military reasons but raise the same questions of exceptional sensitivity and risk as broad attacks on the sea or rail routes.

Optional Strategies

Option A would be to move up steadily to hit *all* the target categories, including the extremely sensitive targets.

Option B would be to continue hammering north of the 20th parallel.

Option C would be to cut back in the near future to concentration on supply routes and re-strikes north of the 20th parallel limited to those necessary to eliminate targets directly important to infiltration and, as necessary, to keep Hanoi's air defense and repair system in place. This option might include one major new target—the Hanoi power station—before the cutback.

[Here follows the final section of the memorandum in which Bundy listed and analyzed nine factors affecting the choice of strategy. These included the likelihood of involving China or the Soviet Union more directly in the war with increased bombing; the adverse impact expanded bombing would have in terms of extending Chinese leverage on Hanoi; conversely, the adverse impact of such bombing in terms of reducing Soviet leverage on the North Vietnamese; the lack of a military advantage from bombing North Vietnam north of the 20th parallel; the inability of the bombing to bring about a more conciliatory attitude on the part of North Vietnamese leadership; the domestic outcry in the United States from an extensive program of bombing; the lack of any boost to South Vietnamese morale that increased bombardment of North Vietnam would bring; the danger that an expanded program would cause allies to desert the effort in Vietnam and bring international criticism that would only encourage Hanoi; and last, the need to reach a decision on a strategy sometime around May 23, Buddha's birthday.]

171. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, May 10, 1967, 1230Z.

25260. For the President from Bunker. Herewith my second weekly telegram.

A. General

1. With the arrival of Bob Komer and General Abrams, the past week has been one of further consolidation of the Mission organization. General Westmoreland has informed me that he proposes to have General Abrams devote a major part of his time and energies to working with the Vietnamese armed forces. I think this is a wise decision and I am sure it will bear fruit. In my most recent talks with both Thieu and Ky, each has indicated certain dissatisfactions with the leadership and performance of ARVN and this in itself is a hopeful sign. Consequently, I think General Abrams can anticipate a cooperative attitude on the part of the GVN.

2. After thoroughgoing discussions with General Westmoreland and Bob Komer, I have come to the conclusion that we can most efficiently and effectively perform our role in support of pacification through a merging of the civil and military organizations under a single manager concept as embodied in NSAM 362² which you have approved. With the responsibility for the program placed in COMUSMACV, and with Bob Komer as deputy for pacification, I think we should have a first rate team and should be able to achieve a maximum utilization of resources. I intend to announce these changes tomorrow and it will make it clear that I regard all official Americans in Viet-Nam as part of one team and not as part of competing civilian and military establishments; that the integrity of OCO will be maintained; and that I intend to see that the civilian part of the U.S. effort is not buried under the military. In many instances, soldiers will be working for civilians as well as the reverse; and that I intend to keep fully informed personally about all developments in this field and to hold frequent meetings with General Westmoreland and Ambassador Komer for the purpose of formulating policy (Saigon 25029).³

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Priority; Nodis. Received at 12:37 a.m. and passed to the White House. The notation “L” on the covering note from Rostow transmitting a copy of the telegram to the President on May 11 indicates that he saw it. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, NODIS Vol. VI) This telegram is printed in full in Pike, *The Bunker Papers*, pp. 8–15.

² Document 167.

³ Dated May 5. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S)

3. On the political scene tensions had continued to build up. Because of the developing strain in relations between Thieu and Ky, I felt that the time had come when we might have to move into the situation in a more definite way than simply by insisting on the absolute necessity for unity among the armed forces. In this connection, as a preliminary, I asked General Westmoreland to see Thieu last Sunday.⁴ He had a very good talk with Thieu (Saigon 24952)⁵ and in the meantime over the weekend leaders of the armed forces had moved into the situation themselves. As a result, the Minister of Defense, General Vien made an announcement to the press last Monday stating that the armed forces were not a political party and would have no Presidential candidate. In talks which I subsequently had with both Thieu and Ky, each expressed himself as highly pleased with the announcement (Saigon 25083 and 25233).⁶ Ky took the further step, apparently on General Vien's advice, of talking to Thieu and telling him of his intention to become a candidate.⁷ These events have served to lower tensions and if the position stated by General Vien is adhered to and respected, hopefully could prove a constructive development. On the other hand, as I shall point out in more detail, it does not guarantee that we are out of the woods. The situation will have to be carefully watched and nursed.

B. Political

4. As I have mentioned the past week saw a rapid crystalization of the question of a military candidate for President and the related problem of the future political role of the Vietnamese military. It had become apparent that the rivalry between Thieu and Ky was undermining the unity and stability of the armed forces and a group of leading Generals decided that the issue had to be rapidly settled. An attempt to get General Thieu to withdraw was not successful and the leading Generals, including Ky but not Thieu, decided that the ARVN should not put forward a military candidate as such, for the Presidency.

5. This decision was announced by General Vien, the Chief of the Joint General Staff, on May 8. In a conversation with me on May 9, General Thieu affirmed his support for General Vien's statement. Later that day, General Ky described to me a long and frank talk that he had had the same morning with General Thieu which seems to have cleared the air somewhat. Thieu was obviously concerned about his position among "the Generals" but Ky said he reassured him of their loyalty should Thieu choose to return to a military career. Ky assured me once again that there would be no split among the military, and if the con-

⁴ May 7.

⁵ Document 163.

⁶ See footnote 4, Document 166.

⁷ Ky officially announced his candidacy on May 12.

versation with Thieu went as described, we can perhaps be more hopeful that this will not occur.

5. Ky made clear that he will be a candidate and that he will attempt a "social revolution" for Viet-Nam, which he considers vital to its future. He is obviously confident that he can win and thinks that it will be by a very respectable mandate. His comments about civilian candidates and the civilian role were not encouraging, however, since he made clear his already known skepticism regarding their motivation and capabilities. I reiterated the importance of having strong civilian representation in any slate in order to increase the votes, and provide a broader mandate particularly from the viewpoint of world opinion, and he said that he was giving this serious thought. Despite his obvious feeling about civilian candidates I am sure he got my point.

6. In trying to assess these fast-moving developments in a preliminary way, I think we can draw certain satisfaction from them. We must, however, recognize that there are many problems ahead and many potential pitfalls in the situation. The decision against having a "military" candidate represented a face-saving formula for Thieu and a means for Ky to announce his candidacy. It also without doubt represented a genuine desire on the part of some of the leading Generals to keep the army detached from the political struggle so that it can pursue its own extremely important and urgent goals. The whole sequence of events is still, to a degree, a papering-over process, however, and good will on the part of both Thieu and Ky, and their supporters, will be required to make it last. It is naturally my hope that Thieu will find satisfaction in a primarily military role in the future, but he has reserved his final position and it cannot be excluded that he may decide to team up with a civilian candidate.

7. I will be following this situation very closely and using my influence as needed to avoid serious splits either among the military or between the military and civilian elements. If we can, in fact, achieve a truly apolitical role for the armed forces during this critical period ahead, it will represent a major and positive achievement. But we must bear in mind that the biggest prize is at stake, and reason and moderation have not been the primary qualities of Vietnamese leaders in the recent past. I am always conscious of the vital importance you place on a satisfactory political outcome here and will of course continue to keep you closely informed as developments occur.⁸

⁸ In his third weekly report to the President, telegram 25937 from Saigon, May 17, Bunker noted that the political situation in Vietnam was continuing to deteriorate. "As you know, factionalism has long been the curse of Viet-Nam's political life and a major reason for the strength of the Communists. While part of this present process is the natural fermentation involved in sorting out new political groupings and alliances in preparation for the coming Presidential contest, many experienced observers have the im-

8. In general terms political tension in Saigon rose during the past week, with the question of the military candidate threatening divisions in the armed forces and relations between the government and the Assembly strained by several key issues in the electoral law. The uncertainty of the political situation has been increased by efforts of the militant An Quang Buddhists to exploit the peace issue.

9. The fluidity of the political situation would be cause for grave concern if it were not that virtually all of the political activity is focused on one objective—the coming elections—and also that most if not quite all of the activity is taking place roughly within the bounds of the legal constitutional framework. The new institutions are fragile, but they are already working to the extent that they are giving direction and limits to current political activity.

10. Containing political conflict within a legal frame is a basic problem here. It was the absence of such a legal frame which caused much if not most of the political instability after the fall of Diem. His government was based on a complex system of personal relationships. When the top was cut off that governmental pyramid, the whole pyramid collapsed. In our situation, in case of a similar catastrophe, our governmental structure remains intact because it is based on solid and essentially impersonal institutions; here the whole government disappears until a new complex of personal relationships can be painfully constructed—and tested—over period of time. We have here now the beginning of a governmental structure that must be made capable of surviving such disasters as the death of a chief of state.

[Here follows discussion of electoral provisions, the press campaign, political groups, the military situation, revolutionary development, economic policies, casualties, and the Chieu Hoi program.]

Bunker

pression that Viet-Nam is at least for the moment farther from a national consensus than it was even a few months ago. I think that we must have patience and do what we can quietly to influence the principals on the stage and see that these maneuvers and discussions do not go too far or too deep." (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S) This telegram is printed in full in Pike, *The Bunker Papers*, pp. 16–21.

172. Memorandum From the President's Special Consultant (Taylor) to President Johnson¹

Washington, May 11, 1967.

Mr. President:

I seem to sense a new wave of pessimism regarding Viet-Nam pervading official circles in Washington, apparently arising from renewed doubts about the bombing of the North and increased concern over future troop requirements to carry on the ground war in the South. For what they are worth, in this paper I would like to give you my current thoughts on the bombing.

I gather that some of your advisors, like Rice in Hong Kong,² are beginning to feel that we are dangerously close to a collision with Peking or Moscow or both as a result of the escalation of our bombing. At the same time, while these risks are being run, we see no sign of "give" on the part of our opponents in Hanoi. Hence, they ask—where are we going with our bombing and where do we come out in the end?

These are, of course, old questions and old fears but always valid ones. Final answers are never possible since they must be based on estimates of future events and are inevitably influenced by subjective attitudes and biases. I have a lot of the latter and, hence, hold strong views on the subject.

We tend to forget our own words used in the past when we express doubts about the justification of our bombing of the North. We have said repeatedly that we have never expected the bombing to *stop* infiltration, only to *limit* it—yet in our private councils I hear the results criticized on the score that infiltration continues in spite of all our efforts and, hence, that the game really is not worth the risks and international heat which it generates.

As for the effectiveness of the bombing in restraining infiltration, I rest the case on the pictures of the Tet logistic activity showing the feverish efforts in North Viet-Nam to take advantage of a lull in the bombing. These pictures show what our bombing holds back. I do not see for the life of me how we could be justified in relaxing this brake which restrains the forces which can be brought against our men in the

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Taylor Report on Overseas Operations & Misc. Memos. Secret. In a May 11 covering note to the President, Rostow wrote: "Herewith General Taylor volunteers in his own way views close to those now emerging from your other advisers." There is an indication on Rostow's note that the President saw the memorandum.

² For Rice's comments, see Document 153.

South. We should remind ourselves that General Westmoreland's requirement for troops assumes a continuation of the bombing and would undoubtedly increase if the bombing stopped without a compensatory reduction of enemy action.

Having defended the need for continuing the bombing, I must say that I would be cautious in extending the target system much farther. Some of our bombing advocates still think in terms of World War II and forget another fact conceded in past discussions—that there is really no industrial target system in North Viet-Nam worthy of the name and no war-supporting industry which, if destroyed, will bear importantly on the outcome of the war. Similarly, the transportation system, though subject to intermittent interruption, can never be damaged to such a point that the minimum supply requirements of combat can not reach the South.

Under these conditions, I do not think that it is worth the lives of our pilots, the loss of our planes or such political risk as may be entailed to enter heavily defended areas and strike or restrike targets which do not have a clear relationship to our bombing objectives. It would be most timely to decide what targets are truly of that class and, hence, need to be put out of action and kept out of action.

But first we have to know our objectives. I assume them still to be the restraint of infiltration and the imposition of a mounting cost on Hanoi for the continuation of the aggression in the South. But while adhering to these objectives, rather than run unreasonable political risks and accept mounting losses in pilots and planes, I would be inclined to remain at about the present level of effort and seek to increase the pressure on the enemy more by the implacable duration of the pain rather than by raising its momentary intensity. One can "escalate" in a variety of ways—expansion of targets, employment of new weapons and tactics, the accumulative increased effect of repetition. The latter form is the one I favor as we run out of clearly remunerative targets—remunerative in the sense that they contribute to our objectives without too great a cost in men and planes.

In summary, I suggest a review of all targets, those struck and those still untouched, to determine which clearly contribute to our bombing objectives as defined above—then I would direct our efforts to this remunerative target system without further thought of pausing, relenting or turning back. We must pass this test of persistence—if we do not, we will be expected to give way at every other point on every other front in this conflict. It is concession which will make the enemy tougher—not the bombing, as some of the critics allege. If we yield on the bombing issue, we can be quite sure of no future "give" by Hanoi on any important point.

Maxwell D. Taylor

173. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, May 15, 1967, 6:45 p.m.

Mr. President:

With respect to the Hanoi TPP:

1. Sect. McNamara is anxious that we permit attack by the four aircraft with Walleye at the earliest possible time. He fears that if we don't conduct the attack immediately, we will get into George Brown's visit to Moscow on May 18,² then Buddha's birthday;³ etc. As you know, he is quite prepared for a cutback in our targeting pattern; but he feels that it will be very difficult to hold unless the Hanoi TPP is out, and he can claim with the JCS that all the truly significant targets in the Hanoi/Haiphong area have been hit.

2. I do not know what position Sect. Rusk will take, but I do know they have been trying in the State Department to work up a way of using our cutback in targets to put some kind of direct or indirect pressure on the Russians to move us towards a settlement of the war. Such an effort does not necessarily imply that we should hold attack on the Hanoi TPP; but there could be argument that we hold that target as a "hostage." Therefore, we face tomorrow two decisions:

—Should we attack the Hanoi TPP immediately?

—What, if anything, do we tell the Russians—and when—about our proposed change in bombing pattern?

3. If we take out the Hanoi TPP, there would be some virtue in discussing with them our proposed change in bombing pattern soon thereafter, if we talk to them at all. The reason: so they read it correctly as the end of one phase of our attack on North Viet Nam and not as a

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXXI. Top Secret.

² British Foreign Secretary Brown planned to visit Moscow May 19–26. Brown told Rusk that he did not think that the Soviets would be amenable to engaging in further peace moves, especially the resumption of their role as Geneva Co-chairman, at the present time. (Memorandum of conversation, May 10; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 7 UK) In telegram 4879 from Moscow, May 12, Ambassador Thompson also agreed that any such initiative would be "unlikely" to appeal to the Soviet leadership. (Ibid., POL 27–14 VIET S) However, in a May 12 memorandum to Rusk, Cooper recommended that Brown be authorized to submit a "revised, more elastic version" of the formula to bring about talks that specifically related Hanoi's cessation of infiltration to an end in the U.S. troop build-up (and not to the initial step of a bombing halt). Rusk approved the measure. (Ibid.) On May 15 the request was transmitted to Bruce for delivery to Brown in telegram 194946 to London. (Ibid.)

³ A military stand-down did occur on Buddha's birthday, May 23.

symbol of a new round of escalation. Dobrynin, incidentally, is not expected back until the end of the week at the earliest.

4. The central problem in talking with the Russians is that if we tell them that we've run out of good targets and are going to stand down, generally speaking, to the 20th parallel, they may simply heave a sigh of relief that some of the pressure is off them and go about their business. They will also tell Hanoi—which is having a quite rough time—and they will also relax (see attached report).⁴ What the Russians are afraid of is a confrontation that might arise from mining Haiphong or other operations in the North that would increase the pressure on them from Hanoi and from the demonstration of their relative impotence to defend a Communist country.

5. If we say anything to them, it might be that we propose to do this for a while. We obviously cannot stop bombing unconditionally and permanently, given what is happening across the DMZ; but they have a certain amount of time in hand in which to demonstrate what they can do to bring peace without serious bombing in the Hanoi/Haiphong area. We will be watching their efforts with interest.

In any case, I wanted you to have some feel for the issue that will be before you tomorrow at lunch.

W.W.R.⁵

⁴ Not found.

⁵ Printed from a copy that bears these typed initials.

174. Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (Bundy)¹

Washington, May 16, 1967.

SUBJECT

Immediate Bombing Decisions and Disclosure to the Russians

We face the immediate issue whether to carry out an attack on the Hanoi power station, and also the immediate issue whether our bombing program thereafter will be along the lines of concentration on supply routes south of the 20th parallel, with only limited re-strikes to the north.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Top Secret.

This memorandum deals with alternative situations or actions with or without hitting Hanoi Power.

A. If We Do Not Hit Hanoi Power

If we do not do this, but do decide to cut back along the lines stated above, we believe that word of our change in policy should be conveyed to the Russians at once.² This word would *both* describe the general nature of the program we intend to follow *and* contain general language urging the Soviets to use their influence to peace over the next few months. (This appeal would not be in terms of immediate action, which we believe would be less effective and in any event extremely unlikely.)

As to the method of communicating to the Russians, the minimum would appear to be Thompson to Kuznetsov or Gromyko. But we might consider urgently a personal letter from the President to Kosygin, which we believe might be stronger and tend to fortify the position of those in Moscow who may be in a more moderate frame of mind. In either case, the action should be taken at once, so that it registers in Moscow during the deliberations of this week and prior to Dobrynin's return, which we now understand will not be until early next week at the earliest.

B. If We Do Hit Hanoi Power

If this action stands alone during the Soviet deliberations of this week, we would have major concern that it would solidify the Kremlin in a harder line on Vietnam and perhaps other issues. Moreover, if this harder line is then registered here by Dobrynin, any subsequent change in policy would have the most undesirable effect in appearing to be a yielding to pressure. Finally, George Brown's mission to Moscow would be seriously undercut, and the results could be serious on our relationship to Brown and the British, which must now be considered progressively more shaky and worrisome. (Brown arrives in Moscow Friday.)³

² In a May 15 memorandum to Rusk and the President, Harriman also strongly recommended informing the Soviets of the decision on the bombing proposal, since not to do so would undermine any incentive on the part of the Soviets to influence Hanoi toward accommodation. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Amb. Harriman–Negotiations Comm.) In a May 16 memorandum to Rusk, Kohler objected to the new round of aerial assault as he saw “no justification of this Hanoi target in which the disadvantages do not clearly outweigh the advantages” and thus advocated that the power plant be dropped permanently from the approved list. In addition, he opposed sending a “Pen Pal” letter to the Soviets explaining the motivation behind the bombing since their “immediate” reply would be a request to cease bombing. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S)

³ May 19.

To meet all these points, we urge the following actions to accompany any decision to hit Hanoi Power:

1. The attack should be carried out just as rapidly as possible, and indeed the authority might be limited to the next 2–3 nights.

2. Concurrent with the decision, the firm decision should be reached to cut back thereafter along the lines stated above.

3. Based on this pair of decisions, we should plan to notify the Soviets and Brown of our intended future course of action, not later than Friday.

- a. *Message to the Soviets.* In the context of an immediately preceding attack on Hanoi Power, we do *not* believe that it would be useful to urge the Soviets in this message to take action toward peace. Such a message would be left to the conversations with Dobrynin on his return. The reason is that we believe a message immediately after the attack would contain an element of immediately preceding threat to the Soviets. Thus, the Friday message to the Soviets would be confined to a statement of the course of action we propose to follow, which we thought they should know for their information.

- b. *For Brown.* For the more general purpose of keeping Brown and the British under control, we believe they should be informed of the two decisions either at once, or at least immediately after the Hanoi strike is executed. This could mean Brown being told of the second decision before the Soviets, and we would of course tell him that we were *not* giving him this information to pass to the Soviets, but expected to do this ourselves on Friday prior to his talks.

4. From a public standpoint, we have always considered that the new policy might be made clear and public in any event. On the timing of this, we must consider Senator Cooper's line in the Senate yesterday, which may well be much reinforced once we hit Hanoi Power. Moreover, there is the further element that the *Pacem in Terris* meeting takes place in Geneva on May 28–31.⁴ If this meeting—with U Thant in a leading role—takes place against a backdrop of a Hanoi Power strike and no indication of change in our policy, it could result in really major noises, joined in by many responsible leaders present, to have us stop the bombing altogether. Hence, this argues strongly for a clear public disclosure of the new policy early next week at the latest.

C. *If We Decide To Hit Hanoi Power, But Are Not Able To Do So May 17–19, Vietnam Time*

The Brown visit and the *Pacem in Terris* meeting seem to us to present a truly serious political picture if we should hit Hanoi Power at

⁴ This convocation of leading international figures and scholars convened on May 29 in order to discuss the easing of international tensions and was especially concerned with the peaceful resolution of the Vietnam war. See Ashmore and Baggs, *Mission to Hanoi*, pp. 88–99.

any time between the 20th and the 31st, Vietnam time. These are not simply normal political events, but could involve repercussions having the most serious effect on our relations with the Soviets, with the British, and with wide circles in this country and abroad.

In a nutshell, if we hit Hanoi Power while Brown is in Moscow, without notice to him, he would regard his whole mission as nullified and destroyed, and the adverse British reaction generally would be doubled in volume and in its serious implications for the whole UK position. We have to reckon with possible dramatic psychological negative effects on British decisions East of Suez. The effect of the Hong Kong crisis is less clear, but it could add a further touch driving the British into a totally "hands-off" and even neutral position on Vietnam and Asia.

The danger from *Pacem in Terris* is more general, and if that factor stood alone it might not be decisive. But it adds a further element affecting the dates between the 28th and 31st. If we hit during that time, the Geneva meeting would undoubtedly turn into a boiling debate on our bombing, with sharply adverse judgments from U Thant and many others, under the klieg lights of the world press.

In short, we believe Hanoi Power simply must be deferred at least until after the 31st if it cannot be carried out between May 17 and May 19, Vietnam time. If the strike should be carried out after the 31st, we should by then have received Dobrynin's message, and could then consider our disclosure to the Russians of the new policy in the light of that message. We would have lost the advantage of anticipating Dobrynin's return, and the best we could do would be to say that Hanoi Power was part of a total package of attacks, long deferred while we thought there was some possibility of movement in Hanoi and the exercise of Russian influence. We could try to the maximum to depict our decisions as logical and consistent, and thus not in response to any hard tone in Dobrynin's message. But the effect on the Soviets would certainly be more mixed, and any possibility of their taking constructive action in the next few months would be at least reduced.⁵

W. P. Bundy⁶

⁵ Presumably the decision to authorize the RT 56 bombings occurred at the regular Tuesday Luncheon held from 1:10 p.m. through 3:25 p.m. The President, Rusk, Rostow, McNamara, Humphrey, Helms, Wheeler, and Christian were in attendance. (Johnson Library, President's Daily Diary) Notes of the meeting have not been found.

⁶ Printed from a copy that indicates Bundy signed the original.

175. Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (Bundy) to Secretary of State Rusk¹

Washington, May 19, 1967.

SUBJECT

Bombing Policy and Possible Communication with the Soviets

On bombing policy, the issue remains whether to cut back to the supply routes, with only enough strikes to the North to keep AA in place and to hit really key targets. Secretary McNamara last night told me that he would define the re-strike situation as applying only to those targets that become newly important or that have come back into operation. No one can say what it would take to keep the AA pinned down; General Wheeler has given the judgment that a move south would start at once if we let our policy become known and even if it emerged only by deeds. I come out that we have a reasonably clear picture of what "limited re-strikes" would mean, and that this is sufficiently clear for any communication we make to the Russians, even though it may need somewhat further refinement among ourselves.

The Wheeler alternative, explained this morning,² would be as follows:

- a. Much heavier armed reconnaissance in Route Package 6.
- b. Continued attacks on fixed targets, including bridges, road and rail lines, depots, dumps, and POL—but *not* including "marginal fixed targets" such as chemical and cement plants. General Wheeler does agree that we have "run out of big targets," so that to this extent the hitting of fixed targets would have less dramatic public impact.
- c. For both armed reconnaissance and previously struck fixed targets, Wheeler would reduce the present 30-mile circle around Hanoi to ten miles and the present 10-mile circle around Haiphong to four miles. This would open up road and rail lines in these areas to armed reconnaissance attacks, and would permit re-strikes on previously struck targets without express authorization. Within the 10- and 4-mile limits, express authorization would continue to be required. General Wheeler appears to believe that there will not be many requests for targets within the new "envelopes" and said at one point that he would not urge re-strikes within these areas unless there were specific military activity.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Top Secret.

² Wheeler, Eugene Rostow, Vance, Helms, Bundy, and Walt Rostow met to discuss the cutback as proposed in the McNamara–Vance memorandum of May 9, Document 169. Eugene Rostow sent a memorandum to Rusk on the same day describing the meeting. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S)

d. In view of the heavy activity necessarily involved in this program, General Wheeler insists that it *must* include heavy attacks on all airfields, including Phuc Yen and Gia Lam.

In addition, as a possible expression of his maximum desires, General Wheeler urges:

e. A combination of mining and bombing against Haiphong. He stated that the over-all program of attacks on road and rail lines “makes less sense” unless we also hit Haiphong.

Analysis of Wheeler Alternative

Excluding the Haiphong element (e.), the program would have significantly less dramatic impact than the major target strikes of the past month. Nonetheless, hard attacks on airfields would cancel this out, and create a continuing impression that we were hammering away hard. The program really equates, without Haiphong, to Option B in my previous analysis, which I attach for its listing of factors against that Option.³

The discussion this morning did not sound as though General Wheeler and the JCS could quickly be brought to accept the program we have all been considering. Secretary McNamara strongly wants a decision if one can be made. You will wish to talk with him, I think, as to how you and he might present the matter. The major difficulty I see in the Wheeler alternative, apart from its sheer volume, is that General Wheeler regards attacks on the airfields as absolutely essential, and these are what most of all would contribute to a general impression that we had not cut back at all.

Arguments

General Wheeler argues the following:

- a. A marked cutback would be “an aerial Dien Bien Phu,” tending away from peace especially in terms of Hanoi’s attitude.
- b. High losses in attacks on the North are more than compensated by the value of the targets there.
- c. AA will move south at once when the program becomes clear.
- d. Any cutdown in LOC attacks anywhere increases the flow.
- e. The focus is already in the South (7300 out of 9000 sorties in the past two months), and any increased effort would encounter dispersal and increased defenses so that it would have marginal effectiveness.
- e. A clear cutdown would have a serious adverse reaction among our military forces on the ground, and especially among our pilots, and he believes would have the same effect on the American people.

In reply, we have pointed out:

- a. Heavy attacks on the road and rail lines (which Wheeler concedes are now limited because Sharp and others simply do not think they are worth it unless we hit Haiphong) simply cannot really cut the flow of the needed quantities of matériel to the south. At most such attacks make Hanoi pay a steady price in terms of effort and dislocation.

³Document 170.

b. Even though a cutback does not have much immediate chance of producing any move toward peace by the Soviets or Hanoi, it could at least make less likely any marked additional Soviet decisions. At some point, the climate would exist for constructive Soviet effort.

c. The generalized costs at home and abroad in terms of criticism.

The counter-arguments are of course spelled out in clear detail in my earlier memorandum, and the capability factors are covered in Secretary McNamara's memorandum.

On timing, we have two new elements. George Brown is delaying his departure from London for at least 48 hours (this is from the Embassy this morning). And Dobrynin has told Thompson that he might not be back until just before Thompson arrives here on June 1.

The first of these means that we could hit Hanoi power again tonight, and DoD seems resolved to do this. The second of these means that we *might* have a few more days in which to affect the Soviet decision-making process.

If a decision is reached on the cutback program today, we could then foreshadow this to Brown in any event, and we could consider whether to tell the Soviets.⁴ On the latter, I find Thompson's cable enigmatic.⁵ Certainly it argues against putting much emphasis on Soviet action for peace into our message. Thompson appears to come out in favor of a simple information message, through a letter from the President to Kosygin.

Accordingly, I attach as Tab C⁶ a revision of the Rostow draft, incorporating your own changes *and* including additional language stating the new bombing policy.

⁴ In telegram 197662 to Moscow, May 18, the Department requested Thompson's opinion on how to deal with the Soviet reaction to the impending air strikes, noting that it was considering conveying to the Soviets that the intended raid was an anomaly. The United States had held off such attacks in order to give North Vietnam a chance to move closer to negotiations, but since Hanoi's response to the overtures in April had been negative, the United States felt that it had no choice but to resume. However, the United States afterwards would not launch attacks above the 20th parallel. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S)

⁵ Thompson replied in telegram 5009 from Moscow, May 19, that he agreed with restricting the bombing to south of the 20th parallel, but informing the Soviets while Brown was in Moscow would cause them to believe that the attack was "another case of our using initiative for peace to cover escalation." He advocated a direct letter from the President to Kosygin, whether or not the power plant was to be hit. Thompson questioned whether the target justified the risk. (Ibid., POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER) At lunch with Thompson the next day, Dobrynin described his inability to explain why the United States had resumed bombing, especially given Kosygin's statements in London, which in his opinion were "not made out of thin air." Thompson replied that the concentration of NVA troops at the DMZ was "one important reason." (Telegram 5015 from Moscow; *ibid.*) The letter from Johnson to Kosygin calling on the Soviet Premier to join with the President in addressing pressing issues such as Vietnam, the Middle East, Cuba, deployment of ballistic missiles, and the nonproliferation treaty, is in telegram 198583 to Moscow, May 19. (Ibid., POL US–USSR)

⁶ Not found.

If the bombing policy decision is not reached this afternoon, the Kosygin letter might still stand, but without the additional material.

If we hit Hanoi power again tonight, Thompson would say not to send the letter at once. I would think Monday⁷ was right in this event, and perhaps in any case.

WPB

⁷ May 22.

176. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, May 19, 1967, 3 p.m.

Mr. President:

The bombing issue is item 3 at 5:00 p.m.² It is, as you well know, both an emotional and technical issue. There are dangerously strong feelings in your official family which tend to overwhelm the strictly military factors.

Sentiments

Sect. Rusk feels the diplomatic cost of bombing Hanoi–Haiphong overwhelms whatever the military advantage might be; but has not devised—nor can he guarantee—a diplomatic payoff for moving the bombing pattern to the south.

Sect. McNamara feels the domestic and diplomatic cost is enormous; and believes Hanoi–Haiphong bombing is not cost-effective, if effectiveness is measured against Communist operations in the South. And that is how he thinks it should be measured.

General Wheeler feels a withdrawal from Hanoi–Haiphong bombing would stir deep resentment at home, among our troops, and be re-

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 2EE Primarily McNamara Recommendations. Top Secret; Literally Eyes Only. An attached covering note indicates that the President wanted the memorandum placed into his night reading; the notation "L" on the note indicates that the President saw this memorandum.

² The President met with Rusk, McNamara, and Rostow (with Christian taking notes), 5:38–6:59 p.m., to discuss Vietnam. (Ibid., President's Daily Dairy) No notes of the meeting have been found, but presumably a decision was reached to attack the Hanoi power station and the Van Dien Army Supply Depot.

garded by the Communists as an aerial Dien Bien Phu. He argues there is net military advantage in hitting Hanoi–Haiphong targets; but finds it hard to make a firm, lucid case because none of us really knows what the cumulative and indirect effects of the bombing are around Hanoi–Haiphong, except that they are making one hell of a military and political effort to try to make us stop. General Wheeler wants to keep the pressure up via armed recce in the North plus attacks on airfields.

In a curious way, all three are arguing negatively: Sect. Rusk to avoid diplomatic costs; Sect. McNamara to avoid (primarily) domestic political and psychological costs; Gen. Wheeler to avoid a different set of (primarily) domestic political and psychological costs.

Issues

So much for sentiments. The question is what kind of scenario can hold our family together in ways that look after the nation's interests and make military sense.

I propose the following.

1. After we have taken out Hanoi TPP,³ we cut back radically on attacks in the Hanoi–Haiphong area for several weeks.

2. At that time, picking up from Soviet pressure on this issue (illustrated, for example, by Tommy's lunch with Dobrynin, reported in the attached message),⁴ we tell Moscow:

—We shall not be doing Hanoi–Haiphong bombing for a little while, but we must, of course, continue bombing north of the DMZ;

—We shall enter no commitments about the future; but they have a matter of, say, 2 or 3 weeks to deliver something by way of negotiations.

3. We would do this in greatest confidence with the Soviet Union. At home we might say we are concentrating in support of the DMZ operation; but without attacking airfields, we might continue some armed recce outside the Hanoi–Haiphong circle (which Bus Wheeler is willing to accept), in order to keep down speculation.

³ The Hanoi thermal power plant, the largest in North Vietnam producing 20 percent of national capacity and only a mile from Hanoi's center, was bombed on May 19. The initial strike failed to destroy the facility. Within 3 days all strikes within the Hanoi restricted zone were prohibited; a day-long stand-down occurred on Buddha's birthday (May 23). In addition to the air escalation, Operation Hickory, involving search-and-destroy operations into the southern side of the DMZ, began on this date. Additional documentation on Operation Hickory is in the Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Operation Hickory. Also, on May 18 U.S. and ARVN forces entered into the southern portion of the DMZ to conduct search-and-destroy operations.

⁴ Thompson's discussion with Dobrynin is reported in telegram 4590 from Moscow, April 25. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S)

4. In this interval we do careful planning and analysis, reexamining all the intelligence, and decide how we should continue to bomb most economically and effectively in the northern part of North Viet Nam, should nothing come of diplomacy in this interval.

5. We should include, in this period of study and reflection, both the mining of the ports (and attack on other import routes) at one extreme; and we should look also at the policy of not resuming attacks in the northern part of North Viet Nam. And, of course, we should also look at all the possibilities in between. At the minimum we must provide for sufficient pressure for them not to shift anti-aircraft South or to rebuild the power grid.

6. By that time we should be close to the period when Bob McNamara and Bus Wheeler return from Viet Nam with whatever manpower recommendations they may then have. We could then reexamine our future bombing policy in the light of the total policy you then adopt towards the next phase of the war in Viet Nam.

7. Comment: This scenario would give:

—Sect. Rusk and Sect. McNamara a break in what they feel is a dangerous pattern of progressive bombing escalation;

—Sect. Rusk and the State Department a chance to prove if they can buy anything important to us through diplomacy at this time.

—General Wheeler would get a temporary rather than a permanent change of bombing pattern, with the opportunity to refine his case and make it to you in, say, a month's time.

8. It is at about that stage—when both manpower and bombing recommendations might be coming to you—that you might wish to call in McCloy, Bundy, etc., as you suggested the other day.

Walt

177. Draft Memorandum From Secretary of Defense McNamara to President Johnson¹

Washington, May 19, 1967.

SUBJECT

Future Actions in Vietnam

General Westmoreland and Admiral Sharp have requested 200,000 additional men (100,000 as soon as possible with the remainder probably required in FY 1969) and 13 additional tactical air squadrons for South Vietnam. The program they propose would require Congressional action authorizing a call-up of the Reserves, the addition of approximately 500,000 men to our military forces, and an increase of approximately \$10 billion in the FY 68 Defense budget. It would involve the virtual certainty of irresistible pressures for ground actions against “sanctuaries” in Cambodia and Laos; for intensification of the air campaign against North Vietnam; for the blockage of rail, road, and sea imports into North Vietnam; and ultimately for invasion of North Vietnam to control infiltration routes. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recognize that these operations may cause the Soviet Union and/or Red China to apply military pressure against us in other places of the world, such as in Korea or Western Europe. They therefore believe it essential that we also take steps to prepare to face such hostile military pressures. The purpose of this paper is to examine the recommendations of our military commanders and to consider alternative courses of action.²

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 2EE Primarily McNamara Recommendations. Top Secret. Prepared by McNaughton. A notation indicates that the President saw the memorandum. A typed disclaimer at the top of the first page reads: “first rough draft; data and ‘estimates’ here have *not* been checked.” The Draft Presidential Memorandum (DPM) was a bureaucratic mechanism for circulating ideas and eliciting views and opinions from senior policymakers. Omitted portions of this DPM are printed in *The Pentagon Papers*, The Senator Gravel Edition, Vol. IV, pp. 477–489.

² In a memorandum the next day, McNamara requested that the Director of Central Intelligence, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Secretaries of the Navy and Air Force analyze the alternatives he had presented (concentrating bombing in the panhandle of North Vietnam or expanding strikes against lines of communication while restricting attacks against unassociated fixed targets and possibly limiting importation capabilities through the ports) especially in terms of their respective impacts upon interdiction, aircraft and pilot loss, and the risk of furthering Soviet or Chinese involvement. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 200, Reading File, May 13–18, 1967) In a May 20 memorandum to the President, Rostow described the DPM as “a reaction against the JCS position as he understands it and projects it—a reaction that goes a bit too far.” He lauded the emphasis on the internal security situation in South Vietnam but believed that additional manpower would be necessary; he also favored continued bombing in the Hanoi–Haiphong area. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 2EE Primarily McNamara Recommendations) In a May 22 mem-

This memorandum is written at a time when there appears to be no attractive course of action. The probabilities are that Hanoi has decided not to negotiate until the American electorate has been heard in November 1968. Continuation of our present moderate policy, while avoiding a larger war, will not change Hanoi's mind, so is not enough to satisfy the American people; increased force levels and actions against the North are likewise unlikely to change Hanoi's mind, and are likely to get us in even deeper in Southeast Asia and into a serious confrontation, if not war, with China and Russia; and we are not willing to yield. So we must choose among imperfect alternatives.

This memorandum will first assess the current situation; second, analyze the military alternatives that seem to be open to us in connection with General Westmoreland's request for more troops and in connection with military action against North Vietnam; third, consider the diplomatic and political options available to us; and, finally, make recommendations.

[Here follows a brief table of contents.]

CHAPTER ONE. APPRAISAL OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

A. United States

The Vietnam war is unpopular in this country. It is becoming increasingly unpopular as it escalates—causing more American casualties, more fear of its growing into a wider war, more privation of the domestic sector, and more distress at the amount of suffering being visited on the non-combatants in Vietnam, South and North. Most Americans do not know how we got where we are, and most, without knowing why, but taking advantage of hindsight, are convinced that somehow we should not have gotten this deeply in. All want the war ended and expect their President to end it. Successfully. Or else.

This state of mind in the US generates impatience in the political structure of the United States. It unfortunately also generates patience in Hanoi. (It is commonly supposed that Hanoi will not give anything away pending the trial of the US elections in November 1968.)

orandum to Helms, Vance, and Bundy, Rostow described an "intermediate strategy" between the positions of the JCS and that put forth in the DPM. He recommended more troops specifically to secure the demilitarized zone and to assist pacification by operating against Communist forces at the provincial level. His program would include a bolstered anti-infiltration effort and greater selectivity in the bombing of the North, as well as the creation of a contingency reserve force. (Ibid., Vol. LXXI, Memos (A))

B. South Vietnam

The “big war” in the South between the US and the North Vietnamese military units (NVA) is going well. We staved off military defeat in 1965; we gained the military initiative in 1966; and since then we have been hurting the enemy badly, spoiling some of his ability to strike. “In the final analysis,” General Westmoreland said, “we are fighting a war of attrition.” In that connection, the enemy has been losing between 1500 and 2000 killed-in-action a week, while we and the South Vietnamese have been losing 175 and 250 respectively. The VC/NVA 287,000-man order of battle is leveling off, and General Westmoreland believes that, as of March, we “reached the cross-over point”—we began attriting more men than Hanoi can recruit or infiltrate each month. The concentration of NVA forces across the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and the enemy use of long-range artillery are matters of concern. There are now four NVA divisions in the DMZ area. The men infiltrate directly across the western part of the DMZ, and supplies swing around through the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The NVA apparently plans to nibble at our forces, seeking to inflict heavy casualties, perhaps to stage a “spectacular” (perhaps against Quang Tri City or Hue), and/or to try a major thrust into the Western Highlands. They are forcing us to transfer some forces from elsewhere in Vietnam to the I Corps area.

Throughout South Vietnam, supplies continue to flow in ample quantities, with Cambodia becoming more and more important as a supply base—now of food and medicines, perhaps ammunition later. The enemy retains the ability to initiate both large- and small-scale attacks. Small-scale attacks in the first quarter of 1967 are running at double the 1966 average; larger-scale attacks are again on the increase after falling off substantially in 1966. Acts of terrorism and harassment have continued at about the same rate.

The over-all troop strengths of friendly and VC/NVA forces by Corps Area are shown in Attachments I and II.³

All things considered, there is consensus that we are no longer in danger of losing this war militarily.

Regrettably, the “other war” against the VC is still not going well. Corruption is widespread. Real government control is confined to enclaves. There is rot in the fabric. Our efforts to enliven the moribund political infrastructure have been matched by VC efforts—more now through coercion than was formerly the case. So the VC are hurting badly too. In the Delta, because of the redeployment of some VC/NVA

³ Not printed are attachments comprised of charts of enemy and friendly strength, combat battalions of both sides, and projected troop deployments.

troops to the area north of Saigon, the VC have lost their momentum and appear to be conducting essentially a holding operation. On the government side there, the tempo of operations has been correspondingly low. The population remains apathetic, and many local government officials seem to have working arrangements with the VC which they are reluctant to disturb.

The National Liberation Front (NLF) continues to control large parts of South Vietnam, and there is little evidence that the revolutionary development program is gaining any momentum. The Army of South Vietnam (ARVN) is tired, passive and accommodation-prone, and is moving too slowly if at all into pacification work.

The enemy no doubt continues to believe that we will not be able to translate our military success in the "big war" into the desired "end products"—namely, broken enemy morale and political achievements by the Government of Vietnam (GVN). At the same time, the VC must be concerned about decline in morale among their ranks. Defections, which averaged 400 per week last year, have, until a slump near the end of April, been running at more than 1000 a week; very few defectors, however, are important people.

[Here follows discussion of Vietnamese politics and rice imports.]

C. North Vietnam

Hanoi's attitude towards negotiations has never been soft nor open-minded. Any concession on their part would involve an enormous loss of face. Whether or not the Polish and Burchett-Kosygin initiatives had much substance to them, it is clear that Hanoi's attitude currently is hard and rigid. They seem uninterested in a political settlement and determined to match US military expansion of the conflict. This change probably reflects these factors: (1) increased assurances of help from the Soviets received during Pham Van Dong's April trip to Moscow; (2) arrangements providing for the unhindered passage of matériel from the Soviet Union through China; and (3) a decision to wait for the results of the US elections in 1968. Hanoi appears to have concluded that she cannot secure her objectives at the conference table and has reaffirmed her strategy of seeking to erode our ability to remain in the South. The Hanoi leadership has apparently decided that it has no choice but to submit to the increased bombing. There continues to be no sign that the bombing has reduced Hanoi's will to resist or her ability to ship the necessary supplies south. Hanoi shows no signs of ending the large war and advising the VC to melt into the jungles. The North Vietnamese believe they are right; they consider the Ky regime to be puppets; they believe the world is with them and that the American public will not have staying power against them.

Thus, although they may have factions in the regime favoring different approaches, they believe that, in the long run, they are stronger than we are for the purpose. They probably do not want to make significant concessions, and could not do so without serious loss of face.

D. International

Most interested governments and individuals appear to assume that the possibility of initiating negotiations has declined over the last several months. Following the failure of Kosygin's efforts while in London, the Soviets apparently have been unwilling to use whatever influence they may have in Hanoi to persuade North Vietnam to come to the conference table while the bombing continues.

The dominant Soviet objectives seem to continue to be to avoid direct involvement in the military conflict and to prevent Vietnam from interfering with other aspects of Soviet-American relations, while supporting Hanoi to an extent sufficient to maintain Soviet prestige in International Communism.

China remains largely preoccupied with its own Cultural Revolution. The Peking Government continues to advise Hanoi not to negotiate and continues to resist Soviet efforts to forge a united front in defense of North Vietnam. There is no reason to doubt that China would honor its commitment to intervene at Hanoi's request, and it remains likely that Peking would intervene on her own initiative if she believed that the existence of the Hanoi regime was at stake.

Whether, apart from Vietnam, China is or soon will be a military threat in the Far East is an interesting question. The current chaos in China certainly bears on the point, as does an analysis of China's history, interests and capabilities. This point is addressed below at page 17.⁴

CHAPTER TWO. ALTERNATIVE MILITARY COURSES OF ACTION

Against North Vietnam, an expansion of the bombing program (Rolling Thunder 56) was approved mid-April. Before it was approved, General Wheeler said, "The bombing campaign is reaching the point where we will have struck all worthwhile fixed targets except the ports. At this time we will have to address the requirement to deny the DRV

⁴ On page 17, not printed, McNamara contended that the Chinese threat to the region and Asia in general had been met. As a result, he foresaw little difficulty in containing Chinese expansionism in the future.

the use of the ports." With its approval, excluding the port areas, no major military targets remain to be struck in the North. All that remains are minor targets, restrikes of certain major targets, and armed reconnaissance of the lines of communication (LOCs)—and, under new principles, mining the harbors, bombing dikes and locks, and invading North Vietnam with land armies. These new military moves against North Vietnam, together with land movements into Laos and Cambodia, are now under consideration by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

For South Vietnam, General Westmoreland and Admiral Sharp have requested 200,000 additional men (4-2/3 divisions, or 42 additional maneuver battalions; one-half as soon as possible with the remainder required probably in FY 1969) and 13 additional tactical air squadrons. The previously approved program—Program 4—called for General Westmoreland to have 87 maneuver battalions (460,000 men) by December of this year, with late arrivals bringing the number of troops to 470,000 by June 1968. (The "approved" and requested forces are shown in detail in Attachment III.)

The new request would increase the total of US forces in Vietnam to 670,000 and the total in the area to 770,000. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have acted on one-half of this request, recommending that it be approved immediately; they are now addressing the second half and the possibility of additional deployments and force increases beyond the 200,000 requested by General Westmoreland. It is the opinion of the JCS that fulfillment of half or all the request would require calling up Reserves, probably in August of this year. Taking account of the fact that Reserves must be returned to civilian life in a short period of time and that Reserves or their equivalent are needed as insurance against trouble elsewhere in the world, we would at the time of the Reserve call-up have to start immediately to add approximately 200,000 to the active forces to serve as replacements for the Reserves, and approximately 100,000 to the forces needed to train and support the additional forces. The impact of deploying the 200,000 additional troops to Vietnam, therefore, would mean a Reserve call-up, an eventual increase of approximately 500,000 in military strength (from 3,600,000 to 4,100,000), and an increase in the Defense budget for FY 1968 of approximately \$10 billion.

In this setting, we have two alternative military courses of action:

Course A. *Grant the request and intensify military actions outside the South—especially against the North.* Add a minimum of 200,000 men—100,000 (2-1/3 divisions plus 5 tactical air squadrons) would be deployed in FY 1968, another 100,000 (another 2-1/3 divisions and 8 tactical air squadrons) in FY 1969, and possibly more later to fulfill the JCS ultimate requirement for Vietnam and associated world-wide contingencies. Accompanying these force increases (as spelled out below)

would be greatly intensified military actions outside South Vietnam—including in Laos and Cambodia but especially against the North.

Course B. *Limit force increases to no more than 30,000; avoid extending the ground conflict beyond the borders of South Vietnam; and concentrate the bombing on the infiltration routes south of 20°.* Unless the military situation worsens dramatically, add no more than 9 battalions to the approved program of 87 battalions. This course would result in a level of no more than 500,000 men (instead of the currently planned 470,000) on December 31, 1968. (See Attachment IV for details.) A part of this course would be a termination of bombing in the Red River basin unless military necessity required it, and a concentration of all sorties in North Vietnam on the infiltration routes in the neck of North Vietnam, between 17° and 20°.

A. Analysis of Course A

Course A would be chosen with a view to bringing additional military pressure to bear on the enemy in the South while continuing to carry out our present missions not directly related to combating enemy main-force units. It would involve accepting the risk—the virtual certainty—that the action, especially the Reserve call-up, would stimulate irresistible pressures in the United States for further escalation against North Vietnam, and for ground actions against “sanctuaries” in Cambodia and Laos.

Rationale

Proponents of the added deployments in the South believe that such deployments will hasten the end of the war. None of them believes that the added forces are needed to avoid defeat; few of them believe that the added forces are required to do the military job in due course; all of the proponents believe that they are needed if that job is to be done faster. The argument is that we avoided military defeat in 1965; that we gained the military initiative in 1966, since then hurting the enemy badly, spoiling much of his ability to strike, and thus diminishing the power he could project over the population; and that even more-vigorous military initiative against his main forces and base areas will hurt him more, spoil his efforts more, and diminish his projected power more than would be the case under presently approved force-deployment levels. This, the argument goes, will more readily create an environment in South Vietnam in which our pacification efforts can take root and thrive; at the same time—because of our progress in the South and because of the large enemy losses—it will more rapidly produce a state of mind in Hanoi conducive to ending the war on reasonable terms.

Estimates by the proponents vary as to how long the job will take without, and with, the additional forces. General Westmoreland has said that without the additions the war could go on five years. He has said that with 100,000 more men, the war could go on for three years and that with 200,000 more men it could go on for two. These estimates are after taking account of his view that the introduction of a non-professional force, such as that which would result from fulfilling the requirement by calling Reserves, would cause some degradation of morale, leadership and effectiveness.

[Here follows discussion of five issues in the form of questions and answers. McNamara did not expect the enlargement of the military through an expanded draft and reserve call-up in order to obtain the 200,000 reinforcements for Vietnam, and the attendant casualties, to lead to "massive civil disobedience." A more efficient use of troops already in country would not provide sufficient numbers to make unnecessary the additional deployment. The new troops would not be able to make a significant difference in the military situation since the enemy controlled the pace of battle. In addition, the North Vietnamese could match any U.S. build-up. Last, a large deployment would generate "irresistible domestic pressures" for an expansion of the war.]

Bombing Purposes and Payoffs

Our bombing of North Vietnam was designed to serve three purposes:

- (1) To retaliate and to lift the morale of the people in the South who were being attacked by agents of the North.
- (2) To add to the pressure on Hanoi to end the war.
- (3) To reduce the flow and/or to increase the cost of infiltrating men and matériel from North to South.

We cannot ignore that a limitation on bombing will cause serious psychological problems among the men, officers and commanders, who will not be able to understand why we should withhold punishment from the enemy. General Westmoreland said that he is "frankly dismayed at even the thought of stopping the bombing program." But this reason for attacking North Vietnam must be scrutinized carefully. We should not bomb for punitive reasons if it serves no other purpose—especially if analysis shows that the actions may be counterproductive. It costs American lives; it creates a backfire of revulsion and opposition by killing civilians; it creates serious risks; it may harden the enemy.

[Here follows McNamara's argument that the current program of bombing had failed to break the will of North Vietnam to carry out its struggle or to reduce the flow of men and supplies into South Vietnam. An escalation of the air attacks, mining North Vietnamese harbors, or invading the North would only bring more American pilot losses and create a devastating public image of the U.S. Government. This ex-

pansion of the war would likely bring a reaction from the Communist bloc, not only in Southeast Asia but in other trouble spots of the world.]

Those are the likely costs and risks of Course A. They are, we believe, both unacceptable and unnecessary. Ground action in North Vietnam, because of its escalatory potential, is clearly unwise despite the open invitation and temptation posed by enemy troops operating freely back and forth across the DMZ. Yet we believe that, short of threatening and perhaps toppling the Hanoi regime itself, pressure against the North will, if anything, harden Hanoi's unwillingness to talk and her settlement terms if she does. China, we believe, will oppose settlement throughout. We believe that there is a chance that the Soviets, at the brink, will exert efforts to bring about peace; but we believe also that intensified bombing and harbor-mining, even if coupled with political pressure from Moscow, will neither bring Hanoi to negotiate nor affect North Vietnam's terms.

B. Analysis of Course B

As of March 18, 1967, the approved US Force Structure (Program 4) for Southeast Asia provided for 87 maneuver battalions, 42 air squadrons, and a total strength of 468,000 men. Based on current forecasts of enemy strength, under Course B it should not be necessary to approve now for deployment more than 9 of the 24 available maneuver battalions and none of the air squadrons—a total of approximately 30,000 men including appropriate land and sea support forces (see Attachment III).

This approach would be based, first, on General Westmoreland's statement that "without [his requested]⁵ forces, we will not be in danger of being defeated, . . . but progress will be slowed down," and General Wheeler's support of that view. General Wheeler added, "We won't lose the war, but it will be a longer one." It would be based, second, on the fact that no one argues that the added forces will probably cause the war to end in less than two years. Course B implies a conviction that neither military defeat nor military victory is in the cards, with or without the large added deployments, and that the price of the large added deployments and the strategy of Course A will be to expand the war dangerously. Course B is designed to improve the negotiating environment within a limited deployment of US forces by combining continuous attacks against VC/NVA main force units with slow improvements in pacification (which may follow the new constitution, the national reconciliation proclamation, our added efforts and the Viet-

⁵ Brackets in the source text.

namese elections this fall) and a restrained program of actions against the North.

This alternative would give General Westmoreland 96 maneuver battalions—an 85 per cent increase in combat force over the 52 battalions that he had in Vietnam in June of last year, and 22 per cent more than the 79 we had there at the beginning of this year. According to this report, we have already passed the “cross-over point,” where the enemy’s losses exceed his additions; we will soon have in Vietnam 200,000 more US troops than there are in enemy main force units. We should therefore, without added deployments, be able to maintain the military initiative, especially if US troops in less-essential missions (such as in the Delta and in pacification duty)⁶ are considered strategic reserves.

The strategy of proponents of Course B is based on their belief that we are in a military situation that cannot be changed materially by expanding our military effort, that the politico-pacification situation in South Vietnam will improve but not fast, and that (in view of all this) Hanoi will not capitulate soon. An aspect of the strategy is a “cool” drive to settle the war—a deliberate process on three fronts: Large unit, politico-pacification, and diplomatic. Its approach on the large-unit front is to maintain the initiative that “Program 4-plus” forces will permit, to move on with pacification efforts and with the national election in September, and to lay the groundwork by periodic peace probes, perhaps suggesting secret talks associated with limitation of bombing and with a view to *finding a compromise involving, inter alia, a role in the South for members of the VC*.

This alternative would not involve US or Vietnamese forces in any numbers in Laos or Cambodia, and definitely not in North Vietnam. Since the US Reserves would still be untapped, they would still be available for use later in Asia, or elsewhere, if it became necessary.

Bombing Program

The bombing program that would be a part of this strategy is, basically, a program of concentration of effort on the infiltration routes near the south of North Vietnam. The major infiltration-related targets

⁶ [Omitted here is a footnote in the source text in which McNamara pointed out that the bulk of the first 100,000 troops would be assigned to the pacification effort in the Mekong Delta region. He questioned the necessity for employing American troops in an area where there was no external threat to the GVN’s security since almost all of the enemy force there consisted of indigenous insurgents.]

in the Red River basin having been destroyed, such interdiction is now best served by concentration of all effort in the southern neck of North Vietnam. All of the sorties would be flown in the area between 17° and 20°. This shift, despite possible increases in anti-aircraft capability in the area, should reduce the pilot and aircraft loss rates by more than 50 per cent. The shift will, if anything, be of positive military value to General Westmoreland while taking some steam out of the popular effort in the North.

The above shift of bombing strategy, now that almost all major targets have been struck in the Red River basin, can to [*enables*] military advantage [to] be made at any time. It should not be done for the sole purpose of getting Hanoi to negotiate, although that might be a bonus effect. To maximize the chances of getting that bonus effect, the optimum scenario would probably be (1) to inform the Soviets quietly that within a few days the shift would take place, stating no time limits but making no promises not to return to the Red River basin to attack targets which later acquire military importance (any deal with Hanoi is likely to be midwived by Moscow); (2) to make the shift as predicted, without fanfare; and (3) to explain publicly, when the shift had become obvious, that the northern targets had been destroyed, that that had been militarily important, and that there would be no need to return to the northern areas unless military necessity dictated it. The shift should not be huckstered. Moscow would almost certainly pass its information on to Hanoi, and might urge Hanoi to seize the opportunity to de-escalate the war by talks or otherwise. Hanoi, not having been asked a question by us and having no ultimatum-like time limit, would be in a better posture to answer favorably than has been the case in the past. The military side of the shift is sound, however, whether or not the diplomatic spill-over is successful.

CHAPTER THREE. DIPLOMATIC AND POLITICAL ACTIONS

[Here follows McNamara's discussion of the fact that both sides believed in their cause while the rest of the world lined up in a variety of ways. The current decision had to place the war in the larger context of U.S. interests in the Far East. McNamara suggested that the original goal for intervention, the "perceived need to draw the line against Chinese expansionism in Asia," had already been met and could be consolidated by following Course B. The only objective the United States had in Vietnam was a limited one, in his view: The U.S. Government was committed to allowing the South Vietnamese people the freedom to determine their own future. The U.S. commitment would cease at the point when the South Vietnamese themselves no longer strived toward this goal.]

D. Suggested Strategy

The strategy that is suggested by the present situation has seven parts;⁷

(1) *Now*: Not to panic because of a belief that Hanoi must be made to capitulate before the 1968 elections. No one's proposal achieves that end.

(2) *Now*: Press on energetically with the military, pacification and political programs in the South, including groundwork for successful elections in September. Drive hard to increase the productivity of Vietnamese military forces.

(3) *Now*: Issue a NSAM nailing down US policy as described herein. Thereafter, publicly, (a) emphasize consistently that the sole US objective in Vietnam has been and is to permit the people of South Vietnam to determine their own future, and (b) declare that we have already either denied or offset the North Vietnamese intervention and that after the September elections in Vietnam we will have achieved success. The necessary steps having been taken to deny the North the ability to take over South Vietnam and an elected government sitting in Saigon, *the South will be in position, albeit imperfect, to start the business of producing a full-spectrum government in South Vietnam.*

(4) *End-May*: Concentrate the bombing of North Vietnam on physical interdiction of men and matériel. This would mean terminating, except where the interdiction objective clearly dictates otherwise, all bombing north of 20° and improving interdiction as much as possible in the infiltration "funnel" south of 20° by concentration of sorties and by an all-out effort to improve detection devices, denial weapons, and interdiction tactics. (The shift might be tied to the May 23 Buddha's birthday standdown. We might talk to the Russians on May 20, make the shift to the funnel on May 21, and go even further by offering to continue the May 23 total stoppage of bombing if North Vietnamese military movements between 17° and 20° are stopped or significantly reduced.)

(5) *July*: Avoid the explosive Congressional debate and US Reserve call-up implicit in the Westmoreland troop request. Decide that, unless the military situation worsens dramatically, US deployments will be limited to Program 4-plus (which, according to General Westmoreland, will not put us in danger of being defeated, but will mean slow progress in the South). Associated with this decision are decisions not to use

⁷ We should not even rule out, as part of the strategy, changing key subordinates in the US Government to meet the charge that "Washington is tired and Washington is stale." [Footnote in the source text.]

large numbers of US troops in the Delta and not to use large numbers of them in grass-roots pacification work.

(6) *September*: Move (force, if necessary) the newly elected Saigon government well beyond its National Reconciliation program to a political settlement with the non-Communist members of the NLF—to try to arrange a ceasefire and to reach an accommodation with the large number of South Vietnamese who are under the VC banner; to accept the non-Communist members of the NLF as members of an opposition political party and, if necessary, to accept their individual participation in the national government—in sum, a settlement to transform the members of the VC from military opponents to political opponents.

(7) *September*: Explain the situation to the Canadians, Indians, British, UN and others, as well as nations now contributing forces, requesting them to contribute border forces to help make the inside-South Vietnam accommodation possible, and—consistent with our desire neither to occupy nor to have bases in Vietnam—offering to remove later an equivalent number of US forces. (This initiative is worth taking despite its slim chance of success.)

E. Analysis of the Strategy

The difficulties with this approach are neither few nor small: There will be those who disagree with the circumscription of the US commitment (indeed, at one time or another, one US voice or another has told the Vietnamese, third countries, the US Congress, and the public of “goals” or “objectives” that go beyond the above bare-bones statement of our “commitment”); some will insist that pressure, enough pressure, on the North can pay off or that we will have yielded a blue chip without exacting a price in exchange for our concentrating on interdiction; many will argue that denial of the larger number of troops will prolong the war, risk losing it and increase the casualties of the American boys who are there; some will insist that this course reveals weakness to which Moscow will react with relief, contempt and reduced willingness to help, and to which Hanoi will react by increased demands and truculence; others will point to the difficulty of carrying the Koreans, Filipinos, Australians and New Zealanders with us; and there will be those who point out the possibility that the changed US tone may cause a “rush for the exits” in Thailand, in Laos and especially inside South Vietnam, perhaps threatening cohesion of the government, morale of the army, and loss of support among the people. Not least will be the alleged impact on the reputation of the United States and of its President. Nevertheless, the difficulties of this strategy are fewer and smaller than the difficulties of any other approach.

Operationally, it may not be easy to get the Saigon government to talk with the VC. Just as we have had great difficulty in getting them to treat prisoners well, to deal with Chieu Hoi ralliers properly, and to make the Reconciliation Proclamation, we will have difficulty getting them to take steps to permit the VC to play a role in the election process or in the government. Of course, Saigon may surprise us in this regard, depending on the kind of government that is chosen in September. But in the past, the problem has been that Saigon clearly was unwilling to talk from weakness. It is possible, but doubtful, that the post-September government will feel strong enough to fly from the nest. We will probably have to push them. Furthermore, the VC may refuse to talk with the Saigon government. So, the fruits of our effort will necessarily be slow in coming. The chances exist, though, of an accommodation government's being agreed to; and, if our efforts in that direction are total, we can probably make it happen.

Here are contingencies for which we must be prepared in pursuing the recommended strategy:

1. *Hanoi will continue efforts to take over South Vietnam by force.* This is to be expected. Indeed, even if we have a negotiated arrangement with Hanoi, we should expect them to struggle on, as Communists are wont to do.

2. *The Saigon government might collapse under the strain.* We would then have to decide whether to snip a piece of stem, plant it, nurture it, and start over again with the VC excluded, or to follow the example of the Dominican Republic and, to the extent that we could, to force a compromise under our own auspices. The situation would be messy, but, in the eyes of the world, our course would have been honorable and our commitment upheld. We have certainly done enough in fulfilling our commitment to give us the right to knock a few heads together! (We need a contingency plan covering the case of the GVN and perhaps the ARVN falling apart.)

3. *No progress might be made toward the accommodation government.* This would put us in no worse, and probably in a better, position than we now are. If the scenario is faithfully carried out, the "rules of the game" will have been changed by then; the definition of "success" will have been changed. Attention will more and more be focused on Saigon's attempt to produce a working consensus of South Vietnamese people, with the US (and hopefully other countries) role more and more that of fending off or canceling out interference from outside, letting the chips inside fall where they may.

4. *An accommodation government might be formed, but it might choose to go neutral or otherwise to ask us to leave.* We should leave, maintaining the guarantee if the government wished it. This might mean we had a "Finland" or a "Cambodia" in South Vietnam.

5. *The accommodation government might go Communist.* This could happen, but would almost certainly take some time—perhaps 3 to 5 years. This is a bad outcome because it is unlikely the result would be a “Yugoslavia.” “Yugoslavias” are created by countervailing force, e.g., NATO, of which there is “none” in Southeast Asia. Instead, a Communist-dominated SVN would probably join with North Vietnam to carry on subversive attacks on Laos, Thailand and Cambodia. (There is less likelihood that North Vietnam would be a puppet of China under this scenario than under one in which we try to press North Vietnam to capitulation. For Hanoi has made clear that, while it dislikes the Chinese, it prefers a Chinese invasion to an American invasion.) How much this case would appear to be a “defeat” for the US in, say, 1970 would depend on many factors not now foreseeable.

The question arises as to how long the Course B strategy can be continued if progress in South Vietnam is slow and there is no movement by Hanoi toward settlement. Could the President stick at less than 550,000 men in South Vietnam and to a bombing program limited to south of 20°? It would not be easy. But, if Course B is chosen, it must be made clear to political and military leaders alike that the troop limit is firm and, short of an imminent military defeat, will not be breached—the objective will be to make progress, even though it be slow, without the risks of Course A.

CHAPTER FOUR. RECOMMENDATIONS

The war in Vietnam is acquiring a momentum of its own that must be stopped. Dramatic increases in US troop deployments, in attacks on the North, or in ground actions in Laos or Cambodia are not necessary and are not the answer. The enemy can absorb them or counter them, bogging us down further and risking even more serious escalation of the war.

Course A could lead to a major national disaster; it would not win the Vietnam war, but only submerge it in a larger one. Course B likewise will not win the Vietnam war in a military sense in a short time; it does avoid the larger war, however, and it is part of a sound military-political/pacification-diplomatic package that gets things moving toward a successful outcome in a few years. More than that cannot be expected. No plan can be fashioned that will give a better chance of success by 1968 or later. Attempts to do so not only produce dangerous plans but also are counterproductive in that they make us look overeager to Hanoi.

We recommend Course B because it has the combined advantages of being a lever toward negotiations and toward ending the war on satisfactory terms, of helping our general position with the Soviets, of

improving our image in the eyes of international opinion, of reducing the danger of confrontation with China and with the Soviet Union, and of reducing US losses.

Robert S. McNamara

178. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, May 20, 1967, 1220Z.

26231. Subject: Thieu-Ky. Ref: Saigon 26200.²

1. Since dispatch reftel we have been sorting out various reports of what has and has not transpired regarding Thieu's candidacy. It is clear that he has made statements to his colleagues and to two or more journalists that he has decided to run, but he has not made a formal announcement of his candidacy. It is not clear when he may make such a declaration or perhaps even that he will make it, although most indications suggest that he will do so at some stage. It remains possible, however, that his present maneuvers are designed in the first instance to block Ky's path and perhaps secondarily to lay groundwork for an alliance between himself and a civilian candidate.

2. Since Thieu's actual intentions and Ky's possible reactions are not now known, we are planning to take a number of soundings with persons close to both of them, making evident our grave concern at these most recent developments and the effect they may have on our position here and support back home for our effort in Viet-Nam.

3. I had made an appointment with Ky for Saturday morning³ to present Senator Case,⁴ but this was cancelled the same morning, and my office was informed that he would be out of town for the day. Following these initial soundings, I am planning to see both Thieu and Ky, either separately or together depending on what seems best at the time, to state our views very plainly regarding the unacceptability of

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Immediate; Exdis. Received at 9:03 a.m. and passed to the White House, DOD, and CIA at 9:15 a.m. Rostow sent a copy of the telegram to the President, who saw it. On a covering memorandum for that copy, Rostow described the Thieu-Ky rift as "serious." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXXI, Memos (A))

² In telegram 26200 from Saigon, May 19, Bunker reported that Do told Calhoun that Thieu had definitely decided to become a Presidential candidate. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S)

³ May 20.

⁴ Senator Clifford P. Case (R-NJ).

personal political maneuvers which may split the armed forces beyond repair and further fragment the already divided and competing political groups in this country. I will make plain that we cannot have our enormous investment of men, money, and world prestige put into question by such personal rivalry.⁵

4. As a footnote to these events, a conversation with National Police Director Loan at mid-day Saturday is perhaps worth noting. It is being reported in greater detail through CAS channels. In brief, Loan said that, if Thieu announced his candidacy, Ky would withdraw, and he and the principal Generals in the Directorate (Thang, Tri, both Viens, and Khang of II Corps were mentioned) would resign on the grounds that Thieu could not win the race for the Presidency, and such a loss would be a serious and unacceptable loss of prestige for the armed forces. While Loan's versions of events, both past and future, must always be taken with a large grain of salt and they are no doubt motivated by a desire to influence our own actions, it is possible that such threats might be contemplated by this group.

Bunker

⁵ In telegram 198950 to Saigon, May 21, Rusk noted that he and the President wanted Bunker to make these points "forcefully" to Thieu and emphasize the promise about unity that he had made at Guam. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S) In turn, Bunker advised in telegram 26466 from Saigon, May 23, that if asked, the President should confirm to the press that he had heard of the rivalry but "express his confidence that they will continue to show the excellent spirit of unity which has prevailed in Vietnam over the past two years." (Ibid.)

179. Editorial Note

On May 21, 1967, the Department of State instructed Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson to deliver a message from President Johnson to Soviet Premier Kosygin. The purpose of the message was to consider concerted action necessary to address issues of common interest, including Vietnam, the Middle East, Cuba, and arms control. A summary of the main points, as transmitted in telegram 198947 to London, May 21, reads:

"The increasingly large scale of NVN forces moving through the DMZ, the increased use of Laotian territory for the movement of men and arms to the south, and the growing use of Cambodian territory by NVN forces create dangers of widening the already dangerous hostilities in SEA. We have (1) restated our desires to have 1962 Accords fully

carried out; (2) reaffirmed our belief that the 1954 Accords provide an adequate basis for peace insofar as North and South Vietnam are concerned; (3) we have urged that international action be taken to assist Prince Sihanouk in maintaining neutrality and territorial integrity of Cambodia. Furthermore, we and others have made numerous proposals designed to lead to de-escalation of conflict in Vietnam. We have also taken number actual steps in this direction without any response from Hanoi. We have been disappointed but will try probe such a possibility further. Therefore, Kosygin is urged once again to help bring conflict to close by exercising fully his prerogatives as the Co-chairman of Geneva Conferences." (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/SUNFLOWER)

In telegram 5033 from Moscow, May 20, Thompson noted the importance of giving Kosygin an indication of the U.S. Government's developing policy on bombing. He suggested adding the following sentence: "For our part we are currently giving urgent consideration to what steps we could take unilaterally to reduce the danger of widening the conflict and hopefully to initiate a reciprocal reduction of violence." (Ibid.) Telegram 198889 to Moscow, May 20, drafted by Secretary of State Rusk, instructed Thompson to add the following statement orally after Kosygin had read the letter:

"I know that my government has been disappointed by a number of efforts which have been made to de-escalate the violence in Southeast Asia. Some of these efforts have been through discussions, others have been through action taken on the ground. For example, as you know, we have only recently held our hand for four months in an area of more than 300 square miles in and around Hanoi. This was done without any quid pro quo but with an indication to Hanoi that we would be impressed if they should take some corresponding action de facto. We also indicated to them that this type of move on our part could be expanded if there was an interest in de-escalation. I know that my government was hopeful that a way can be found to stimulate a reduction of violence and serious movement toward peace; and any indication along these lines would be met on our part by simultaneous reciprocal steps that would reduce the danger of widening the conflict." (Ibid.)

Ambassador at Large Harriman believed that the President's "pen pal letter" to Kosygin presented an opportunity. The Soviets wanted de-escalation but were in a difficult situation, given Chinese intransigence toward negotiations. The Soviet Union had to exert greater influence in Hanoi, and could only do so with continued strong support to North Vietnam. The United States could "strengthen the hand" of Kosygin and others who wanted peace in Southeast Asia by informing them of what Harriman surmised to be the administration's impending decision on restraint in bombing and troop augmentation. Harriman believed that East European and other nations that could help indirectly in inducing conciliation should also be briefed. (Memorandum from Harriman to the President and Rusk, May 22; Library of

Congress, Manuscript Division, Harriman Papers, Special Files, Public Service, Subject Files, Johnson, Lyndon 1967)

180. Memorandum From Director of Central Intelligence Helms to President Johnson¹

Washington, May 22, 1967.

SUBJECT

North Vietnam Bombing

1. This morning (22 May) I called in my dozen most experienced, knowledgeable officers who work on the Vietnam problem for a general discussion on the bombing of North Vietnam. This discussion focused on two questions:

(a) Does bombing harden the will of the North Vietnamese people?

(b) What bombing attack pattern will produce results most favorable to US interests?

2. The consensus opinion on the first question was:

(a) A distinction must be drawn between the will of the Hanoi leadership and that of the North Vietnamese people.

(b) The bombing has produced a net decline in the morale of the people, but not to the point where popular attitudes exert political pressure on or pose political problems for the Hanoi leadership.

(c) The bombing has probably hardened attitudes of Hanoi's leaders, i.e., the Politburo of the Communist Party. There is no bombing attack pattern which, of itself, will force the Politburo to change its strategy because of the cost inflicted on North Vietnam. Hanoi's leaders

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 3F. Secret; Sensitive. In a memorandum Helms sent to McNamara on June 1, while noting the differences that existed between the two bombing strategy options put forth in the DPM (Document 177) in terms of pilot and aircraft losses and the impact on the Communist bloc, he concluded that neither option would significantly curtail nor deter Hanoi's aggression against the South and its ability to maintain or increase the level of insurgency. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 200, CIA Proposals for Alternative Programs for Bombing NVN, June 1, 1967) For denunciations of the U.S. Government's apparent escalation of the war by the DRV on May 21 and by the PRC on May 22, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1967*, pp. 936–938.

view the war as a test of wills in which they believe that, politically, they can outlast the US.

3. On the second question, my officers' consensus judgments were:

(a) Any suspension, or termination, of the bombing would be regarded by Hanoi as a victory and would intensify Hanoi's determination to persist in the struggle. It would harden Hanoi's position and would not make Hanoi more amenable to negotiation or settlement.

(b) A new attack pattern concentrating almost exclusively on targets south of the twentieth parallel would also be construed by Hanoi as a victory and produce consequences similar to those outlined above. Furthermore, North Vietnam would be able to concentrate its anti-aircraft capabilities in the southern part of the country and reprogram human and material assets now tasked and programmed to repair bomb damage north of the twentieth parallel.

(c) Even if our entire effort were devoted to infiltration-associated communications lines and targets in route packages 1, 2 and 3, we would only augment the actual interdiction effect on infiltration (over that inflicted by present attack patterns) by a factor of about ten percent. Aerial bombardment cannot stop infiltration or reduce route capacities below the relatively small amount required to support the war in the south.

(d) The optimum attack pattern would involve concentration on infiltration-associated targets in southern North Vietnam with random attacks in the northern part of the country sufficient to prevent major redeployment of assets and restrikes on particular targets already hit whenever these show evidence of significant reconstruction or repair.

Dick

181. Editorial Note

In a series of intelligence reports of May 23 and 26, 1967, the Central Intelligence Agency predicted the probable consequences of an expanded military effort in Indochina. In Intelligence Memorandum No. 0646/67, entitled "Reactions to Various US Courses of Action," May 23, the CIA examined combinations of approaches that could be taken and assessed what result might occur from each. It concluded that the only action that would seem to have a moderating impact on Hanoi would be a restriction of the bombing south of the 20th parallel, which

correspondingly would generate a reduction in domestic criticism in the United States. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 200, CIA Intelligence Memorandums—The Status of NVN)

CIA analysts also focused on the lack of deterrent impact of the bombing campaign, in spite of extensive destruction, on the continued resolution of the North Vietnamese to pursue the war. In Intelligence Memorandum No. 0649/67, "Consequences of Mining the Sea-ports and Water Approaches to North Vietnam and Bombing the Northern Railroads and Roads," May 23, the CIA concluded that an expanded effort against North Vietnam would have "serious economic consequences, but it would not be likely to weaken the military establishment seriously or to prevent Hanoi from continuing its aggression in the south." (Ibid.) In Intelligence Memorandum No. 0647/67, "The Reaction of the North Vietnamese to the Stepped-up Air Attacks," May 23, the CIA described a psychologically "very tough" North Vietnamese people whose capacity to endure the war had been actually strengthened by the raids. (Ibid., CIA Intelligence Memorandums—Rxn NVNese—5/23/67) Intelligence Memorandum No. 0648/67, "The Effectiveness of the Rolling Thunder Program," May 23, confirmed suspicions that the bombing campaign had not lived up to expectations:

"Despite the increased tempo of the air war during the last 10 weeks, the Rolling Thunder program has made only limited progress in meeting two of its current objectives: to limit or raise the cost of sending men and supplies to South Vietnam and to make North Vietnam pay a price for its aggression against the South. The damage to economic and military targets has not degraded North Vietnam's ability to support the war sufficiently to affect current levels of combat in the South. There are no signs that the determination of the regime to persist in its aggression has abated and despite increasing hardships, the morale of the populace has not eroded to a point where widespread apathy and war weariness are threatening the control of the Hanoi regime. The recent expansion of the bombing program has, however, badly damaged the modern sector of the North Vietnamese economy and has increased the disruption of orderly economic activity." (Ibid., CIA Intelligence Memorandums—The Status of NVN)

On May 25 President Johnson asked McNamara for an appraisal of the damage to key North Vietnamese supply sectors. In response to a request from McNamara, the CIA prepared two memoranda subsequently sent to the President. No. 0651/67, "The Status of North Vietnam's Electric Power Industry as of 25 May 1967," May 26, stated that in fact 87 percent of the country's power generating capacity already had been lost due to the bombing campaign, and No. 0650/67, "The Status of North Vietnam's Petroleum Storage Facilities as of 25 May 1967," May 26, stated that 85 percent of North Vietnam's major storage capacity had likewise been destroyed. This major destruction had

not impaired Hanoi's military capability. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXXII)

182. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, May 23, 1967, 1120Z.

26467. Ref: State 198956.²

1. We are in general agreement with the observations in your 198956 concerning the need for a real contest and the importance of convincing all factions that they must conduct a fair election and unite behind the winner. We have made these points repeatedly to all concerned and will continue to do so.

2. We also agree that an ideal solution would be for both Ky and Thieu to run as members of two major political groups which would include the chief civilian contenders. This does not seem to be a practical possibility, however. In the first place, the civilian candidates see the rivalry between Ky and Thieu as their golden opportunity. Huong's reported decision to run and his apparent decision not to join forces with Ky is probably a direct result of his observation that his own chances of victory are much enhanced by the division within the military. Neither Huong nor Suu are likely to make an alliance with the military if they think they can win without making any specific deal that would dilute their own freedom of action after the elections.

3. More important, we continue to fear the possible results of such a split in the military. The stability which we have had for the past two years has rested on a degree of military unity which is fragile and now already subject to very heavy strains. If this fragile unity is further subjected to the tensions of a hard-fought election campaign, we think the risk of seriously undermining military discipline is very great. We continue to doubt that as a practical matter the officers involved can isolate their political role and attitudes from their military activities, although this would be the best solution if it could really be achieved. If they break on political grounds, we fear they will not be able to per-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Immediate; Exdis. Received at 8:37 a.m. and passed to the White House, DOD, and CIA at 9:52 a.m.

² Dated May 21. (Ibid.)

form their vital fighting and pacification roles effectively thereafter. We also fear that the losing faction in the political struggle will be sorely tempted to try to redress the balance with the military resources at their disposal. This of course raises the spectre of coups and counter-coups that plagued Viet Nam for so long after Diem was overthrown.

4. We therefore continue to think that the best way to post-election national unity and stability is for the military to back a single candidate who will team up with strong civilian leaders who complement the military candidate. If such a ticket is offered it will tend to gather support from those who want to be on the winning team. It will also offer the best prospect of a true military-civilian partnership capable of prosecuting the war and pacification with singleness of purpose and eventually capable of negotiating an acceptable peace.

5. At some point we may find it necessary to throw our weight behind Ky or Thieu in order to force a resolution of the conflict between them. Certainly the present maneuvering is beginning to be destructive of military unity. It would be much better, however, for both military unity and our future relations with the new government if this were not necessary, since the resulting ticket will inevitably become identified as an American one. We believe that there is at this time still room to hope that Thieu and Ky will come to terms without our interference. Bui Diem's role, as reported separately,³ may be helpful. They are certainly aware that if they both run, the prospects for either winning are much reduced. They must also recognize that splitting the military may endanger their country's future. If we can persuade them that they cannot enlist us on the side of either faction, they are more likely to compose their differences. Moreover, there is the real possibility that nothing we could say or do would force one or the other to withdraw from the contest at this time. We are therefore inclined for the present to continue our policy of taking the side of neither in a clear way while urging both, directly and indirectly, to get together and work out a compromise.⁴

Bunker

³ See footnote 4, Document 183.

⁴ In his weekly telegram to the President, telegram 26566 from Saigon, May 24, Bunker described the approach that he would take if the impasse continued: "If it is necessary to move in, I intend to make it very clear to both Thieu and Ky that political maneuvers which may split the armed forces and further fragment the competing political groups in this country are entirely unacceptable. I will make it plain that the welfare of the country must come ahead of personal rivalries and that we cannot have our enormous investment of men, money and world prestige put at risk by such rivalries." (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S) This telegram is printed in full in Pike, *The Bunker Papers*, pp. 22–28.

183. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam¹

Washington, May 25, 1967, 8:55 p.m.

202559. Ref: (a) Saigon's 26460;² (b) Saigon's 26467.³

1. We very much appreciate analysis contained reftel (b) and efforts reported reftel (a) and in other communications to get as clear a picture as possible of private views and behind-the-scenes actions of principal actors, military and civilian, in the current pre-election maneuvers. Continue to keep us posted as closely as you can, including the role of all the significant military figures beyond Ky and Thieu.

2. Like you, we continue to fear the results of a split in the military and your efforts should therefore continue to be aimed at avoiding this. Surest way to avoid a split is through Ky–Thieu agreement that only one of them will run and prompt decision on which it will be. While our efforts to date have met with little success we agree you should nevertheless continue to press hard on this point, citing numerous expressions made directly to both of them from highest levels US Government and also pointing out consequences of rift, some of which are already beginning to become evident at least behind the scenes. Even Ky and Thieu themselves have begun to descend to exchanges of personal criticisms which could be forerunner of sharp split if they do not promptly resolve their differences.

3. We realize that what we are asking you to accomplish is much easier said than done. There is temptation to consider turning to what on the surface would appear to be relatively easy way out, namely for US to intervene to force decision by making a choice, which would presumably be for Ky. We continue to believe, however, that we are not obliged at this time to make a choice and we continue to regard it as unwise to do so. There would be no keeping secret the fact that the US had made a choice and in so doing we would thus have alienated temporarily at least some significant military leaders. The very act of making a choice would also be taken as clear evidence of the controlling role of the U.S. on domestic Vietnamese matters, would make it doubly difficult for any government associated with us to shake off the puppet label and would quite possibly precipitate the withdrawal from the coming elections of some or all of the civilian candidates. The vic-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Exdis. Drafted and approved by Unger.

² Bunker reported on the efforts of Bui Diem to mediate between Thieu and Ky in telegrams 26460, May 23, and 26561, May 25. (Ibid.)

³ Document 182.

tory of a military presidential candidate has advantages and disadvantages both within Viet-Nam and in the US and world opinion but such a victory if it takes place through a reasonably free and open contest is certainly one of the possible if not likely results of the election process, and an acceptable one. The victory of a military presidential candidate bearing a US stamp of approval and elected in such fashion as to raise serious question about whom he represents would undo much of last year's progress on the political front and is a course which we are not now ready to adopt even if the alternatives were also unattractive.

4. A related consideration is that our making a choice now would rule out Thieu as a candidate (if in fact our intervention was successful, which is not by any means assured) and we would regret ruling out at this stage this and other alternative possibilities.

5. Under these circumstances our policy for the present should continue to be an even-handed one between Thieu and Ky, concentrating our efforts on having them decide which of them will be the military candidate. Meanwhile we will have to remain continuously alert so that we can reconsider our position if it appears that military unity seriously risks being jeopardized. Otherwise we will be hoping that events themselves may impose a choice on Thieu and Ky or may create a situation in which we could precipitate a choice without taking the onus for it.

6. Meanwhile it is important to keep before the military two other principles which they must support, namely the proper conduct of the elections and a commitment to accept their outcome if properly held and to support the resulting government.

7. Your comments are invited.⁴

Rusk

⁴ In telegram 26779, May 25, Diem told Bunker that Thieu had stated that "his personal prestige gave him no alternative but to stay in the race," especially since his relations with the other Generals had soured his chances to become Chief of the Vietnamese Joint General Staff. Ky later told Diem that the Generals would apologize to Thieu if necessary in an effort to encourage him to not become a Presidential candidate and instead to assume the leadership of the military. Bunker praised Diem's role and recommended that "we should continue to let the Vietnamese carry the ball in trying to resolve this problem." (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S) On May 26 Bunker reported that based upon reassurances to him as well as to Bui Diem, Thieu "gave reason to hope that he will not seek to aggravate the feelings that have already been aroused." (Telegram 26790 from Saigon, May 26; *ibid.*)

184. Editorial Note

On May 25, 1967, Chester L. Cooper, Ambassador Harriman's Special Assistant, submitted to Under Secretary of State Katzenbach a memorandum entitled "A Settlement in Vietnam." Written under guidelines set forth by Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Bundy, it was a comprehensive examination of the myriad of steps by which the peace process would evolve into a final settlement and what that would portend for South Vietnam.

In describing the current peace initiatives of the U.S. Government, Cooper noted the difficulties the administration faced in convincing other countries, the American public, and most importantly the leadership of North Vietnam of its earnestness for peace. While the reticence of the administration to soften on its objectives in Vietnam in conjunction with increased military pressure in the field reflected resolve, such a stance was unlikely to improve the overall position in potential negotiations with the North Vietnamese for at least the next 18 months. Since military action was not making the DRV Politburo any more pliable, Cooper argued, there was no reason to refrain from beginning direct talks as soon as possible. In turn, some sort of quasi-recognition of the National Liberation Front (NLF) and a bombing halt would induce flexibility in Hanoi and cause the North Vietnamese to enter into serious negotiations. Aside from direct contacts, Cooper believed that the best channel through which to generate the opening of peace talks remained the Soviet Union. The perceived leverage that the Soviets had over the DRV might compel Hanoi to seek a political solution and not a military one, provided the United States demonstrated its earnestness through its actions.

The settlement model Cooper developed consisted of the following terms:

"1. Closely-Meshed in Time with NVN/VC Actions, and Under Mutually Agreed-Upon International Supervision, the U.S. and the GVN Agree To:

"a. Halt bombing and other military actions against North Vietnam.

"b. Halt additional U.S. and allied military reinforcements to Vietnam.

"c. Plan for the phased withdrawal of all outside forces.

"d. Undertake a cease-fire in South Vietnam.

"e. Effect an early token withdrawal of U.S. and allied forces.

"f. Proceed with the first tranche in the phased withdrawal of U.S. and allied forces (subsequent withdrawals will take place by predetermined arrangement throughout the remaining part of the scenario).

“g. Guarantee the safety of personnel opposing South Vietnamese and allied forces in South Vietnam, and assist in the elaboration and execution of a general amnesty between opposing forces.

“h. Develop a South Vietnamese Government representing all shades of South Vietnamese opinion, with that government exercising effective authority over the entire territory of South Vietnam. This government is to be chosen on the basis of free democratic elections.

“i. Respect and abide by the wishes of the South Vietnamese Government regarding its political and foreign policy orientation, including the pursuit of a genuinely neutral policy.

“j. Encourage the early establishment of relations between North and South Vietnam and/or of such forms of mutual association as both may desire.

“k. Complete force withdrawals and close out U.S. military bases after forces are withdrawn.

“l. Welcome North Vietnam participation in any regional economic benefits contemplated now or in the future.

“2. *Closely-Meshed in Time with US/GVN Actions, and Under Mutually Agreed-Upon International Supervision, Hanoi and the NLF Must Agree To:*

“a. Halt the flow of North Vietnamese personnel and military supplies to South Vietnam as well as to Laos and Cambodia.

“b. Present a schedule for the withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces from South Vietnam to their home territory.

“c. Cease all forms of terror in South Vietnam.

“d. Undertake a cease-fire in South Vietnam.

“e. Effect an early token withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces.

“f. Proceed with withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces.

“g. Agree to and implement a general exchange of prisoners.

“h. Respect and abide by the results of the political arrangements in South Vietnam.

“i. Respect and abide by the wishes of the South Vietnamese Government regarding its political and foreign policy orientation, including the pursuit of a genuinely neutral policy.

“j. Complete force withdrawals.”

These terms could be presented as a “package” or negotiated on a separate basis. Due to a “negotiations-shy” North Vietnamese leadership as a result of their disappointment at the 1954 Geneva conference, substantive discussions might occur in private contacts before formal settlement talks (although they were just as likely to come only after the convening of the conference). The most difficult issues in-

cluded the modalities of a bombing halt, southward infiltration, troop withdrawals, and a political role for the NLF. The projected future for South Vietnam likely would involve a Saigon regime based upon an “uneasy coalition.” The situation would “probably be tolerable” for both the United States and the NLF. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET)

Contrasting advice existed among the military command. A cease-fire plan requested by JCS Chairman General Earle Wheeler was submitted to him by his staff in memorandum DJSM–664–67, May 29. The premise of the JCS plan was that “the highest probability of achieving an adequate settlement in Vietnam will be generated by continuing our offensive operations until the main elements of a settlement have been agreed upon.” It set forth the mechanics of a cessation of hostilities in the event of a cease-fire prior to the implementation of a settlement in Vietnam. The memorandum assessed the critical impact of the following stipulations:

“a. *Formal Agreements for Cease Fire and Withdrawal.* A meaningful lasting peace which gives a reasonable assurance for the achievement of South Vietnam objectives cannot be attained through negotiations unless North Vietnam will act in good faith. From this it follows that throughout the development of the cease fire agreement and any subsequent withdrawal agreement, the North Vietnam participants and any NLF observers present must indicate their good faith by adaptable attitudes, constructive proposals and a lack of intransigence. Such a demonstration by communists in this situation would be novel, and US/GVN actions would have to be carefully weighed to maintain our bargaining position in an atmosphere of unprecedented cooperation. On the other hand, such cooperation is considered improbable. We will more likely have to counter domestic and international pressures to relax from a strong bargaining position so that some kind of agreement can be negotiated.

“b. *Temporary Freeze Areas.* Any concept of ‘temporary freeze in-place’ or ‘general stand-still truce’ is not only impractical due to the lack of precise interpretation of such terms, but would tend to militate against the achievement of US objectives in SVN. They should be avoided in specifying details of any cease fire arrangement for these reasons:

“(1) They tend to inhibit the conduct of essential unrestricted US/GVN reconnaissance throughout SVN.

“(2) They are unlikely to restrict the VC/NVN freedom of action.

“(3) They may inhibit possible withdrawals of VC/NVA main force units.

“(4) They do not realistically consider the likely possibility that VC local and irregular forces will continue unrestricted hostile functions separate from any actions by main force elements. Because of

these considerations, the attached plan does not provide for 'freeze areas' but rather refers to secure and contested areas as zones for defensive postures before the initiation of verification sweeps into VC controlled areas.

"c. *Points of Egress and Safe Passage during Withdrawal.* It is highly improbable that NVN will be a party to any formal agreement on withdrawal of NVA units and any Viet Cong wishing to accompany them. To do so would reverse their repeated denials of having any troops in the south. Moreover, they would not trust the allies to keep quiet about any secret agreement which would relieve them of any requirement to publicly admit that NVA units would withdraw. In view of this an acceptable withdrawal or relocation scheme may be to specify routes and egress points back along the NVN infiltration routes to their base areas with safe passage guaranteed. It would be preferable to specify routes leading to the sea for ship transit to NVN or to Route 1 for transport to the DMZ in order to keep main force units out of Cambodia and Laos, but this would involve overt movements probably too exposed for NVN to accept. During withdrawal of any sort, it would be preferable to prohibit resupply into SVN from NVN, Laos, or Cambodia. If medical or food supplies are required by any enemy unit withdrawing, the allies could offer to supply these on request in order to eliminate any opportunity for malfeasance on the part of the enemy. However, there is little point in prohibiting resupply, because enforcement of such a prohibition would be extremely doubtful. In addition, there is little likelihood that enemy main force units would agree to withdraw to any locales unless they included access to resupply routes. Obviously, the attached plan cannot include details on these matters because the military situation existing at time of preliminary talks will dictate the preferred solutions.

"d. *Detection and Verification Measures.* There is the ever present danger that initial talks with Hanoi and subsequent conferences and negotiations will hinge on the inclusion of some sort of international supervision of the cease fire and any withdrawal agreements. There is no case since World War II where an international peacekeeping organization has been fully effective in maintaining the peace. Moreover, in view of past patterns of communist intransigence, subversion and obstructionist tactics, there is serious doubt that any form of an international control commission can be effective in Vietnam. The best way of assuring effective verification is unilateral inspection and policing of the truce by the belligerents themselves. This is particularly true during the period of negotiations. In this way, each side would be required to rely primarily on its unilateral intelligence capabilities to detect violations of the plan. For US/Government of Vietnam/Free World Military Assistance Forces, such activities would include: patrolling and unlimited access to all parts of South Vietnam, including the southern

portion of the demilitarized zone; air reconnaissance and surveillance over North Vietnam, South Vietnam, and Laos, as well as other forms of intelligence collection, to include coastal surveillance of North Vietnam, South Vietnam, and Cambodia, and covert operations in Laos and Cambodia to detect any attempts by North Vietnam/Viet Cong to infiltrate personnel and matériel into those countries and from them into South Vietnam. Under a formal agreement each side could exchange Military Liaison Missions (MLMs). These missions should have free access to all parts of South Vietnam. They would be tasked to verify compliance and to investigate complaints of violations of the agreements. Each side would be responsible to its own authorities. The ability of the mission's team to move freely in the investigating role would provide a test of the good faith of North Vietnam and the Viet Cong, although the nature of the problem would permit the enemy to attempt a great deal of hoodwinking with associated propaganda fallout. Even if the inspection procedures should fail to accomplish the desired purpose, the framework would provide a military communications link which could aid our continuing unilateral efforts to inspect and verify the withdrawal or relocation of NVA/VC main units from SVN while ferreting out the Viet Cong irregulars and political infrastructure.

"e. *National Reconciliation*. This is included in the attached plan as a portion of psychological operations. Ralliers under this program will be administratively handled and processed in existing and expanding Chieu Hoi facilities. Detailed GVN plans for managing substantial numbers of National Reconciliation ralliers from the VC middle and high-level structure are not yet formulated and will require additional intergovernmental planning in Saigon. We definitely want to increase the enthusiasm of the GVN for Doan Ket and Chieu Hoi programs and to strengthen their resolve to make them work."

The memorandum added the corollary that the assumptions relating to potential peace talks were "unrealistic" if the North Vietnamese refused to make any meaningful concessions before they began. (Department of Defense, Official Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 911/305 (15 Apr 67) IR 1139)

185. Telegram From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson in Texas¹

Washington, May 28, 1967, 1528Z.

CAP 67464. Herewith a lucid account from Bill Jorden of an interview with Ky.

Harry McPherson and I had long and very candid talk last night with PM Ky. He was friendly and open. We made standard points on fair elections, civil-military cooperation, need for mandate, etc. Highlights of Ky's position follow:

On politics—He will run; expects to win; guesses he will get between 35 and 40 percent of vote.

Thieu is puzzle. Ky doesn't know what he wants. Suggested Thieu may want simply to cut into Ky's support and make sure latter doesn't win.

Or he may want increase his bargaining power for other post in new government. It not clear what job he wants.

Huong and Suu are too old; can't cut it; too weak for real leadership. If Suu elected, there would almost certainly be military coup.

Only a military man can provide the leadership this country needs now to move forward—and he clearly meant himself.

All the candidates will probably come up with programs, but they will all sound alike. Question is: who can convert a program into action.

On problem of mandate, he expects good vote. In addition will offer major posts to all other candidates. "Then we will have one hundred percent of the vote represented in the government."

He was utterly frank on problem of corruption. It is real; it is serious; it is major source of discontent. And many people in high places undoubtedly involved. He has moved against some—General Co, Quang, others. But it takes times to gather solid evidence. He will move against many others when (not if) he is elected.

Americans sometimes inconsistent on this question. They want Vietnamese to have democracy—and equal justice and no arbitrary police actions. But when they talk of corruption and graft, they want us to "move fast" and not worry about technicalities. We can't do both.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXXII. Secret. Received at the LBJ Ranch at 11:12 a.m. The notation "L" on the telegram indicates that the President saw it. The President was in Texas May 28–30. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary) Jorden and McPherson were in Vietnam May 22–June 3 to assess field operations and RD activities. (Telegram DEPSECDEF 3536, May 15; *ibid.*, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. LXXI)

"If I have hard facts, I am prepared to move fast. But we can't act only on rumors and suspicion."

I told Ky of a judge in Long An who was allegedly releasing VC suspects for "lack of evidence"—after receiving extensive bribes from VC.

"If I have facts, I will remove him tomorrow."

Ky displayed surprising flexibility on matter of negotiations and dealing with Liberation Front.

He said Vietnamese generally were nervous about dealing with the Front now. Army especially was concerned, and if a civilian tried to open contact, there would be fear of a "sellout"—especially among army men.

Only a military man could undertake this matter because his colleagues in the army would know he would not give up South Vietnam's independence. Ky had openly said he was ready to talk with Ho. There would have been serious trouble—and real worry—if a civilian had said same thing.

With time, many things would be possible. In a year, Ky would be prepared to consider all kinds of things that not possible to work on now—talks with the Front, coalition, etc.

(*Note:* This first mention of possible coalition by any Vietnamese leader to my knowledge.)

There is concern that now Vietnamese politics not stable enough to let NLF function as political group. Also it is dominated by Communists.

Ky indicated his readiness to contact non-Communist Front elements and "bring them over."

In answer to fairly blunt question, Ky said he would not consider serving as Vice President or PM under a civilian.

He noted that power of PM was weak. He could not get done the things he wanted to do unless he had power of the Presidency.

If civilian were elected, "I will go back to my air force."

I got the impression that if he did return to air force, a civilian President had better sandbag the roof of the Presidential palace.

Ky gave strong assurances election would be fair and honest.

He was confident of wide support. He said problem would not be getting a large vote, but perhaps in trying to see that his vote didn't get too high.

The voting would not be rigged, but if the vote was too one-sided many people would just assume it had been.

Ky spoke eloquently and with deep feeling about his role in Vietnam.

"I could make a lot of money, but I haven't. I could go off as Ambassador to Paris or Morocco and have a good life. I know how to enjoy things and how to spend money. I can make money when I leave this job. And I will.

"But now my work is here. This is my country; these are my people. And I want to help them. I want them to live well, to have the things they want. That is what is important to me."

Harry and I felt positive he meant every word of it.

186. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, May 30, 1967, 0530Z.

27074. 1. In conversation with PM Ky on Monday,² I emphasized the great importance we attached to the evolution of the constitutional process and the forthcoming elections through which we hoped and expected the free will of the people would be expressed. I said that as I had mentioned to him before we believed the establishment of a freely elected, stable constitutional government would be the best kind of demonstration to the Viet Cong and NVN that South Viet Nam was here to stay and would represent an extremely important psychological factor in the successful outcome of the struggle. I added that it was essential that the elections be carried out fairly and honestly not only from the viewpoint of domestic reaction here but also that of world opinion as well. It was therefore important that acts of repression and indiscriminate use of press censorship should be avoided. A further absolutely essential factor was the maintenance of the integrity and unity of the armed forces. I reminded the PM of the assurances both he and Thieu had given to the President at Guam, assurances which had been repeated to me also on every occasion in which I had seen either of them.

2. I said that I had, of course, seen the reports of General Thieu's possible candidacy and had had a very frank talk with General Thieu last Friday on the question of armed forces unity should there be two military candidates.³ While I came away with the impression General

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Exdis. Received at 3:19 a.m. Repeated to Bangkok and to CINCPAC for POLAD. Rostow sent a copy of this telegram as CAP 67494 to the President at the LBJ Ranch, where it was received at 11:47 a.m.

² May 29.

³ See footnote 4, Document 183.

Thieu had not yet definitely made a decision to run he had assured me that should he decide to do so, he felt that unity of the armed forces would not be affected and that General Vien would be able to carry through with his determination to keep the military aloof from politics. I also said that I had the impression that General Thieu felt somewhat isolated and that his feelings had been hurt by what he considered to be something less than considerate treatment by some of his colleagues.

3. Ky replied that he was aware of this, but the fact was that General Thieu had been unable to make up his mind and because of this inability, Ky's colleagues had insisted that he come forward as a candidate. He had informed General Thieu that he proposed to run, and Thieu had interposed no objections. He felt, however, that there was some danger that with two military candidates in the field, the unity of the armed forces might be affected and that this, of course, must be avoided. He realized that Thieu did feel somewhat isolated and that his feelings had been hurt and he, therefore, proposed to talk with Thieu this week to try to find out what he really wanted and see whether he could not come to some satisfactory arrangement with him. I encouraged Ky to do this and said that I felt it would be a most constructive step.

4. I referred again to the importance of seeing that the elections process was carried out fairly for all candidates and the need to avoid pressure tactics, the discriminatory use of censorship and the making of ill considered statements which could be easily misconstrued, such as the one he was reported to have made that he would use whatever means he thought necessary to oppose a civilian candidate whose policies he did not agree with. Statements such as these could give rise to criticism in the US as well as in other countries. He agreed that this was so and said that he proposed to see that elections were conducted fairly. With reference to the statement he was quoted as having made, he said some correspondent asked him a silly question such as, what would you do if a Communist was elected? He said this was in the same category as someone asking, what would you do if Mr. Kosygin were elected President of the U.S.?

5. He referred to further matters in connection with elections. The first was in regard to the recommendations of the Directorate to the Assembly for changes in Article 10 and in reverting to the dates originally proposed for the elections. He said that some members of the Directorate had wanted to take a hard line with the Assembly. He persuaded them that this would be very unwise as it might result in the resignation of the Assembly and they would be back where they started from. As an alternative, he got together at lunch on Monday with about 70 members of the Assembly and talked to them about the suggestions of the Directorate and secured their agreement to accept them.

6. His second point was an account of the long talk he had with Huong at Vung Tau on May 18, in which he said they came to a complete understanding. According to Ky, Huong said that he expected Ky to win, but thought it was important that he himself should run as a civilian candidate. He would, however, agree to cooperate with Ky in the government after the elections. The net result of their talk was that whoever was the winner would employ the services of the loser. Ky went on to say that if elected he proposed to ask the cooperation not only of Huong, but of other candidates and thus he would be able to establish a stable regime representing a broad spectrum of the voters.⁴ This was the essential thing, what the country needed and wanted was a strong regime rather than a strong man. He disclaimed any desire to set up anything resembling a dictatorship.

7. As we had heard reports that General Thang was again considering giving up direction of the pacification program in order to run Ky's campaign, I asked him about Thang's present status. Ky said that Thang had again expressed some doubt as to his ability to work with our new organizational setup and again had suggested that he appoint General Vien to head up the pacification program. I said that this really didn't make sense to me, it would be like making Secretary McNamara responsible for our part of the pacification program. Ky agreed, said that General Vien had too much on his hands already and had told Thang that he must continue with pacification program. If Thang should attempt to run his campaign, Ky would be accused of putting his own personal fortunes ahead of the country's interest. I told Ky that he should reassure General Thang that I was certain he would find the new organization more efficient and effective and easier to work with. He assured me that Thang would stay with the pacification program.

8. As I left Ky said, "Don't worry, I know how to handle the situation. It is like a western movie, it will come out all right in the end."

9. *Comment:* Ky talked in a serious vein, but as in his conversation with McPherson and Jorden,⁵ exhibited confidence not only to his ability to win the election but also to handle the difficult pre-election problems. I hope he is right and that the happy ending of the western movie

⁴ In telegram 204933 to Saigon, May 30, Rusk suggested that Bunker attempt to get all of the Presidential candidates to pledge to allow the people to determine the candidate and to support a "government of national unity" after the election. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S)

⁵ See Document 185.

which he envisages will not be preceded by the gun play which is a normal part of every western.⁶

Bunker

⁶ On May 31 Bunker reported to the President in his weekly message as transmitted in telegram 27204: "If both Thieu and Ky can be as reasonable with one another as they sound when talking with me, a talk between them may still offer hope of opening the way to a mutually acceptable compromise. I cannot be overly sanguine, however, as Vietnamese seem constitutionally incapable of really frank, straightforward talks on such personal and political matters. The date for filing of candidacies is now a little over a month away. As we approach that date, the pressure for some kind of decision will mount, but at the moment the heat of the issue has gone down, and in the next few weeks there should be opportunities for the principals to work out an arrangement. I will do my best to encourage both to move in this direction." (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S) This telegram is printed in full in Pike, *The Bunker Papers*, pp. 29–36. On a covering memorandum attached to this telegram, which the President saw, Rostow wrote: "Herewith Amb. Bunker's weekly with great deal on Ky as a campaigner. Ky really is a learner." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, NODIS Vol. VI) The President and Thieu exchanged personal messages on the occasion of Memorial Day; for text of these messages, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1967, pp. 938–939.

187. Editorial Note

The response of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Draft Presidential Memorandum (DPM) of May 19 (Document 177) served to justify the conclusions reached in JCSM 286–67 and JCSM 288–67, May 20, 1967, in which the JCS on strategic grounds called for an extensive force build-up in order to improve the operational capability of the military forces in Vietnam. With this additional capability, the JCS proposed an offensive strategy against North Vietnam much wider in scope than those posed in the DPM. (Johnson Library, Papers of Paul C. Warnke, McNaughton Files, McNTN XIII—Memos 1967 (1))

In CM–2377–67, May 24, JCS Chairman General Earle Wheeler told Secretary of Defense McNamara that a call-up of reserves would be necessary. He pointed out the military could not maintain the momentum of recent offensives, respond to contingencies of enemy threat in particular areas, or expand pacification given the current force levels. In any case, the air and naval attacks against North Vietnam could not be curtailed without giving a significant advantage to the North Vietnamese. Even strengthening the effectiveness of the South Vietnamese troops would not minimize the need for the additional deployment of U.S. forces. (*Ibid.*)

In JCSM–307–67, June 1, the Joint Chiefs took issue with the characterization of their position in "Course A" of the DPM. This option

was “an extrapolation of a number of proposals which were recommended separately but not in combination or as interpreted in the DPM.” However, the Joint Chiefs were adamantly opposed to the recommendations of the DPM embodied by “Course B” and its inherent “pessimism.” The strategy would not permit an early termination of the war and could encourage a “redoubling” of enemy efforts to pursue a military solution. Furthermore, the DPM suggested “a major realignment of US objectives and intentions in Southeast Asia without regard for the long-term consequences.” They recommended that the DPM not be sent to the President. (Department of Defense, Official Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 911/300 (19 May 67) IR 1393)

In JCSM-312-67, June 2, the JCS considered McNamara’s alternatives (a curtailment of air operations above the funnel or attacks throughout North Vietnam limited to major airfields that would include either closing the ports or leaving them open) but recommended their own proposal that involved attacking essential war-supporting fixed targets and lines of communication, neutralizing airfields, and closing the ports. (Washington National Records Center, RG 330, McNamara Files: FRC 71 A 3470, Service and JCS Recommendations re Bombing of DRV) As for the service chiefs, Secretary of the Navy Paul H. Nitze supported the recommendations of the DPM, but Secretary of the Air Force Harold Brown advocated the expanded campaign of the JCS since in his view a restriction of bombing to below the 20th parallel would allow an increased southward infiltration. (Memoranda from Nitze and Brown to McNamara, June 2 and June 3, respectively; Johnson Library, Papers of Paul C. Warnke, McNaughton Files, McNTN XIII, Memos 1967 (3))

188. Editorial Note

On June 2, 1967, U.S. aircraft attacked an anti-aircraft battery at Cam Pha, 50 miles north of Haiphong in North Vietnam. Some of the ordnance struck the Soviet freighter *Turkestan*, which had been moored near Cam Pha. Damage to the ship was extensive and one crew member died. The Soviet Union issued an immediate protest of the incident which it termed “a crying violation of the freedom of navigation, an act of banditry which may have far-reaching consequences.” On June 3 the U.S. Government responded that the attacks by two flights of aircraft had taken place but “only against legitimate military targets” and that it was North Vietnamese anti-aircraft fire which had struck the Soviet vessel. An apology from the U.S. Government was transmitted for

delivery to the Soviet Government in telegram 207926 to Moscow, June 3. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S) After further investigation, a note delivered to the Soviet Embassy in Washington on June 20 acknowledged that a third flight of American planes had struck the ship.

On June 29 another Soviet ship, the *Mikhail Frunze*, was damaged near Haiphong during a similar attack. Citing the failure to live up to its promise to avoid such incidents, the Soviets warned that the U.S. Government would “bear all the responsibility for the dangerous consequences of aggressive acts by U.S. aviation.” On July 13 the United States admitted the possibility that the *Mikhail Frunze* could have been hit by its aircraft but labeled any damage sustained by the vessel as “inadvertent.” For these public statements, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1967*, pages 939–941, 945. On the same day State Department Legal Adviser Leonard Meeker sent to Executive Secretary Benjamin Read a memorandum outlining steps to be taken in order to minimize similar incidents in the future. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S) Further documentation on these episodes is *ibid.*, OS 12 USSR and POL 33–6 US–USSR.

189. Memorandum From the Deputy for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (Komer) to President Johnson¹

Saigon, June 3, 1967.

Dear Mr. President:

Let me take advantage of Harry McPherson,² who is staying with me and swilling my booze, to pass on my latest thoughts.

To start with better news first, a month in country has *not* led me to change my view that we are gaining momentum and that by the end

¹ Source: Johnson Library, White House Central Files, Confidential File, ND 19/CO 312, Vietnam (Situation in), June 1967–Sept. 1967. Eyes Only. An attached covering note from McPherson, June 14, reads: “Bob Komer asked me to pass this on to you.” According to a notation on the note, the President requested that McPherson send the memorandum to McNamara.

² McPherson visited South Vietnam from late May through early June, when he departed for Israel. For his report to the President, see Document 197.

of next winter it will be clear for all to see that we have gained the upper hand. In other words, while the war might not be “won”, we will clearly be winning it.

In fact, the one thing that could go most seriously wrong in 1967 is the political process. Thieu and Ky, in their squabbling, could produce a major setback. On the one hand Ky, in desperation because Thieu (despite his assurances of military solidity) has chipped away some of his support, might resort to blatant election rigging. On the other hand, we might face a situation in which none of 5–6 serious candidates gets enough of a vote to give him a solid mandate—thus opening up another period of political jockeying at our expense. Either would be bad from our viewpoint.

Casting “the American vote” may be the only way to forestall such dangers. This in turn has obvious disadvantages, but Washington and the Mission should face up to this issue. At least we should make a conscious choice rather than let one be made by default as is happening now. And with elections three months off, there is little time left to decide. Gene Locke and I are deliberately playing an activist role on this one, so as to give you and Bunker a basis for choice.

I’m very much of two minds on the other gut issue you now confront—more US troops. On the one hand, I am more convinced than ever that we can get a lot more for our money out of the Vietnamese, at peanut cost to us in more advisers, more equipment, more incentives, more insistence on canning incompetents and weeding out the corrupt. I hope you’ll encourage Bob McNamara to raise unshirted hell on this one. Then Abrams and I will carry through.

The real question is not whether we need more US troops to “win” the war in the South, but rather how fast we want to win it. I hesitate to guess, but would hazard that we have a 50–50 chance of achieving a clear upper hand by mid-1968 *without* major US add-ons, if everything else breaks our way. By then, the deterioration of the VC should be amply evident. But Westy, as a prudent commander, naturally wants a reserve for contingencies and feels under great pressure for results.

One last thought. Further bombing escalation in the North may not be as interesting, from a military *or* political point of view, as “lateral escalation” to disrupt the infiltration routes in Laos and Cambodia. Since the actual effect of the planned barrier is unknown, we should seriously consider other options too. I would not even suggest this did I not feel that the alternatives confronting you (in terms of calling up reserves as well as bombing) might be even more painful. Also, such great pressures are building up among the US military here for getting at the sanctuaries, they might soon generate greater hawk problems back home.

Whenever I quail at all my problems of getting pacification moving, I think of the problems *you* confront. I’d rather be pacifier than

President, and you can depend on me to keep after my share of this war.

Respectfully,

Bob Komer

190. Memorandum From the Political Counselor of the Embassy in Vietnam (Calhoun) to the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker)¹

Saigon, June 5, 1967.

SUBJECT

Current Political Situation

One of the few advantages of being under the weather a few days in Saigon is that it gives one time to think. So I shall try to sort out a few thoughts as to where we are and where we might go. If they don't contribute much, please blame it on the viral infection which was perhaps more deep-seated than I thought!

In looking at the electoral scene broadly, the Thieu-Ky factor fits in as only one aspect, although one of importance and perhaps of greater urgency than others. But it should be solved as a part of the broader goals we seek, rather than as a problem in isolation as it tends to appear now. Our goals in general are to unify the country politically so far as possible and to give a greater sense of participation in government to as wide a representation of Vietnamese as possible, consistent with the demands of security.

A serious split in the military, which we now have, is dangerous because it could threaten the entire process. It can be solved either by healing the split or by submerging it in the broader problem so that it may lose some of its poison. Our present efforts, and those of people such as Bui Diem and Nguyen Van Kieu, are directed at healing the split before it becomes unbridgeable. There is a real question whether it hasn't already become so, but these efforts are worth pursuing until they either succeed or it becomes clear such a result is not attainable. Despite Bui Diem's pleas for patience, I am increasingly doubtful that

¹ Source: Center for Military History, DepCORDS/MACV Files, GVN Elections (General): 1967. Secret. Copies were sent to Locke and Komer.

Thieu and Ky are going to be able to agree on a solution acceptable to them personally and to their adherents. The only feasible solution seems to be Ky as Presidential candidate and Thieu as a four or five-star head of the Armed Forces, with full authority over RVNAF except the final power of the President and with agreement between the two of them as to what the RVNAF's tasks and powers should be. If Thieu and Ky are unable between themselves to agree on this solution, I doubt it can be achieved by other means, even with General Westmoreland's strong support. And we are faced with a dilemma in deciding whether to engage Westmoreland's considerable prestige for this purpose, since to be effective it must in effect be a demand and it could then only be interpreted by all political circles as the Americans opting for Ky as President. No matter how it is done, this is the way it will be interpreted by the military and civilians alike. If we choose this course and recommend it to Washington, we should point out this consequence clearly. I would be against it myself, since it closes out most of our other options now and makes Ky our man henceforth, win or lose. If Thieu and Ky can arrive at it by themselves, fine.

Assuming that they can not work it out themselves and that Thieu and Ky remain divided, we should try to guide all the principal candidates—civilian or military—into recognizing the need for a government of national union so long as the war continues. By recognition I mean public declarations of intent which are explicit and clear as to what type government will be formed by the candidate who wins. To achieve this, I believe we should work on the principal candidates—or perhaps initially on their closest associates or political managers—to make them understand the overriding need for a wartime coalition employing the best talents available to Vietnam in order to unify the many diverse elements in the country—regional, religious, minorities, military, civilian, etc. A common declaration of intent by all the serious candidates might temper the existing bitterness and division, even among the military, before it grows deeper with the election campaign. If successful, such a declaration might also bring some moral pressure to bear on the “incumbent” candidate(s) not to wage a political campaign based on unlimited use of their very considerable advantages.

The practicability of such an approach is hard to judge. The incumbent(s) are undoubtedly counting heavily on their built-in assets and probably also estimate that public and other criticism and pressure will not diminish them seriously. The civilians on their side are counting on their southern and civilian appeal to overcome their material disadvantages. To declare publicly that they will bring their military opponents into high office—including the Prime Ministership—will in their eyes undercut one of their principal appeals to the electorate. Thus, while we might be able to get Thieu or Ky to make some such declaration, it is more doubtful that Suu and Huong and

Ha Thuc Ky would be prepared to do this in advance. If it can be combined with *effective* guarantees of truly free elections and really equal facilities available to all candidates, then it might be more acceptable to them. This argues further for strong pressure by us on Ky to assure that such are provided. In addition, we might consider the added pressure of suggesting that official observation teams be invited from one or more international organizations to observe during July and August. These teams should be assured of the right to make public demands for equalization of opportunity based on specific complaints brought to their attention or filed with the Central Election Campaign Committee. Only if these teams had full and immediate access to all news media could these demands have their effect in time. To set up such a complex and highly organized arrangement through existing international organs may not be feasible in the short time remaining but it should at least be considered. As you know, Do invited U Thant to send observers but he was non-committal and he did not send them in September 1966. My own experience in Korea with UNCURK² hardly encourages me to believe that this procedure can be very effective, although there they had an autocratic and clever opponent in Syngman Rhee³ and here we have a world press much more focused on the problem.

With all its potential disadvantages, perhaps we should still quietly explore the feasibility of some such course of action, first with Washington and then with the principal competing groups. To be successful the result must be public agreement on *all* aspects by *all* parties, namely (1) free and fair elections, the results of which will be accepted by all parties; (2) equal facilities for all qualifying candidates; (3) an effective Central Election Campaign Committee able to speak and act freely and impartially; (4) international teams to observe and make public statements on the foregoing; (5) post-election cooperation by the principal candidates through offers to employ the talents available in opposing tickets to form a government of national union to prosecute the war and negotiate the peace.

Even if we decide not to pursue all of these points, I believe we should (1) continue to encourage quiet mediation between Thieu and Ky, (2) pursue "equal facilities" vigorously with Ky and let our position ultimately become known, (3) not let our options be closed out prematurely or by inadvertence, and (4) keep continuously in touch at various levels with all the principal candidates and their closest supporters.

² UN Commission on Unification and Reconstruction of Korea.

³ The Republic of Korea's first President.

If nothing else, perhaps the foregoing could be a useful basis for discussion in a small group.

191. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, June 7, 1967, 0450Z.

27739. Ref State 207351.²

1. We too have been concerned in recent weeks over possible inadvertent US involvement in partisan political trips or other activities of candidates. Mission election committee has examined the matter carefully and has now completed guidelines this general subject for distribution throughout Mission and to field. These were approved by Mission Council June 5 and full distribution should be completed by end of this week.³

2. These guidelines include basic statement US policy of impartiality and intent assist GVN to assure honest and fair elections, and two detailed instructions on transportation and equal access to information media. Copies are being pouched Department.

3. Although we can do much to assist GVN through making available our resources, success of all our efforts depends, in last analysis, on willingness GVN to apply its efforts and its own resources to assuring honest and fair elections and equal facilities for all qualifying candidates. This in turn depends directly upon Ky and those around him and, to a less clear degree on Thieu.

4. I intend to see Ky in the near future and to go over this whole subject with him carefully and plainly. In addition to clarifying our policy with respect to assistance, I plan to discuss with him the damaging effects of his censorship policy and other aspects of his apparent exploitation his official position. I shall also review with him ways in which we can assist the GVN to equalize opportunities all candidates and assure fair and honest elections.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Exdis. Received at 9:52 a.m.

² In telegram 207351 to Saigon, June 2, the Department instructed the Mission to develop guidelines for the use of U.S. aircraft to avoid partisan political usage by South Vietnamese leaders. (Ibid.)

³ Not found.

5. I plan to await the outcome of my talk with Ky before deciding when and how to raise the subject with Thieu. In the light of these conversations we will be better able to judge what additional measures might have to be taken on the U.S. side.

Bunker

192. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, June 7, 1967, 1120Z.

27781. For the President from Bunker. Herewith my sixth weekly telegram:

A. General

1. The papers which I mentioned in my message last week as having requested Ambassador Locke, General Westmoreland and Ambassador Komer to submit—i.e. on the optimum use of manpower by Ambassador Locke; on the reorientation of the Mission of the Vietnamese armed forces and their revitalization with emphasis on improvement and quality by General Westmoreland; and on an action program for stepping up revolutionary development by Ambassador Komer are in course of preparation.² I hope to be able to report on the substance of these and our conclusions as to what ought to be done on these priority matters in the near future.

2. Both here and on field trips, Bob Komer has explained to our entire organization engaged in revolutionary development the new organizational setup and how we expect it to work. I am sure this has

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Priority; Nodis. Received at 9:42 a.m. In a June 7 covering memorandum transmitting this telegram to the President, Rostow noted that Bunker wanted to know whether President Johnson wanted any changes in the way in which the Ambassador reported in order to be “as helpful to you as he can.” No subsequent alteration was indicated. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 8B (1) [A] Bunker’s Weekly Report to the President) This telegram is printed in full in Pike, *The Bunker Papers*, pp. 37–44.

² In telegram 27204 from Saigon, May 31, Bunker informed the President of his plans to have a weekly meeting with Westmoreland, Locke, and Komer “in order to review progress, to formulate policy and plans, and to devise methods for pushing ahead with priority projects.” In addition to the three papers mentioned, Bunker assigned to himself a paper on “evolution toward a constitutional government and keeping the political process on track.” (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S) These papers have not been found.

been effective in removing any lingering apprehension on the part of the civilian elements of the organization that they were being submerged in the military. I am satisfied that we shall have a better and harder-hitting organization for our advisory and supporting role in revolutionary development with this merging of the civilian-military elements and the consequent concentration of responsibility envisaged in the single management concept we have adopted.

3. In a series of splendidly executed offensive operations undertaken by General Westmoreland since late April in which a total of over 11,000 of the enemy have been killed in action, the enemy has been kept off balance and his time schedule been disrupted. Captured documents, reports by returnees and others indicate that the main effort of the enemy to achieve his summer campaign objectives has been postponed from May to June or July.

4. While the enemy's offensive thrust has been blunted, it has not been eliminated. Enemy pressure (from two and possibly three divisions) continues along the DMZ. Infiltration through Laos also continues and during the past three weeks enemy activity in the central highlands has stepped up significantly. General Westmoreland's strategy of anticipating enemy threats and of keeping him off balance has paid off handsomely, and is one which he intends to continue in view of what he foresees as an intensification of enemy attempts to achieve his summer campaign objectives.

5. An encouraging element of these recent operations has been evidence of the increased effectiveness of the Vietnamese armed forces. In a number of heavy engagements throughout the country ARVN units have responded well to the challenges placed upon them. They contributed materially to the success of the initial operations in the DMZ, killing 342 enemy with a loss of only 31 of their own forces. In a total of 14 other operations in the I Corps area during the past six weeks, ARVN units accounted for 1,400 enemy killed in action. On my trip to the II Corps area yesterday, General Larson told me that the ARVN units under General Vinh Loc's command were giving a good account of themselves. I believe that where the ARVN is weakest, however, is in their pacification role where motivation and performance still leave much to be desired. Here, of course, the regional and popular forces are also important elements and all are getting increased attention.

6. The Thieu–Ky rivalry which I shall refer to later in more detail still continues, but efforts are being made by the Vietnamese, with our prodding, to try to work out the problem themselves. I reported on the talk I had had last Saturday³ with Ambassador Bui Diem (Saigon

³ June 3.

27480)⁴ who has been actively pursuing the matter and who has been working with Thieu's brother, Kieu, to prepare the ground for a meeting between Thieu and Ky. We are reporting today on our latest talks with Kieu (Saigon 27753).⁵ I also expect to see Bui Diem today or tomorrow and will report on any further developments. I think it is highly desirable that the two principals, with the help of their colleagues, should settle this problem themselves, if at all possible through a genuine and full understanding. I will, of course, continue to encourage them to do so, but am not especially sanguine. I am keeping a close watch on the problem to determine if and when more active intervention on my part is required.

B.

7. Bui Diem and General Thieu's brother, Nguyen Van Kieu, are continuing their efforts to bring Thieu and Ky together, and they are still hopeful that a mutually satisfactory compromise can be worked out between them if the ground is carefully prepared before they meet. They may succeed, and certainly that would be the best solution, but I have the growing feeling that time is running against this effort and that the political temperature is again going up rather than down. I mentioned that I had spoken with Bui Diem on June 3 about his efforts to work out a compromise between Ky and Thieu (Saigon 27481).⁶ He said that the effort to bring them together at a dinner on May 31 had failed because Thieu did not want to see Ky in the presence of the other Generals. However, Thieu let it be known that he would like to see Ky alone, and Ky agreed to this. Bui Diem understood from Kieu that Thieu might be willing to take the Presidency of the Senate or the top position in the armed forces under certain circumstances. Diem also thinks that the chief motive behind Thieu's present actions is the feeling that he has not been treated fairly by the other Generals. If this is true, it might be possible to overcome Thieu's bitterness and offer him a position that he can accept. However, Bui Diem has evidently not yet succeeded in bringing Ky and Thieu together. A conversation on June 6 with Thieu's brother, Nguyen Van Kieu, while confirming generally Diem's account, indicates that the differences in viewpoint between Thieu and Ky remain substantial.

⁴ Bunker reported in on his meeting with Diem in telegram 27480 from Saigon, June 3. Bunker related his frustrations that despite Ky's prior assurances to him that he would meet with Thieu "in order to endeavor to come to some arrangement with him," he had not yet done so. Diem explained the delay by referring to the necessity "for careful preparation" before Ky and Thieu met. In addition, Diem told Bunker that if Thieu recognized that his chances for election were "not good" if he was to be pitted against Ky, he might consider alternatives to becoming President, including the leadership of the Senate or a return to the armed forces. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S)

⁵ Dated June 7. (Ibid.)

⁶ Dated June 3. (Ibid.)

8. The Assembly was drawn into the Thieu–Ky conflict last week and it is now involved in a bitter fight over the issue of the election dates. From recent remarks by both Thieu and Huong supporters, I judge that Thieu is considering throwing his weight behind Huong, a move which if taken prematurely would almost certainly preclude any amicable settlement between Thieu and Ky. I hope that a face-to-face talk between Thieu and Ky will be arranged before any public decisions of this sort are made, however.

9. The Thieu–Ky rivalry was reflected in the Assembly in the handling of the rather confused issue of the 30 “introductions” required of Presidential candidates. Thieu went on the public record on May 11 in opposition to the requirement, terming it “unconstitutional and undemocratic.” The Assembly ignored his opposition and voted the requirement into the electoral law. At Thieu’s behest, the Directorate on May 24 agreed to ask the Assembly to drop this provision in the electoral law.

10. Ky reportedly went along with the decision in the Directorate meeting. His supporters in the Assembly continued to press for the “introduction” clause, however, and Ky himself was quoted in *Viet-Nam Press* on June 1 as saying that the requirement “doesn’t matter for those who have the ability to run.” At the same time we had a number of reports that indicated Ky’s supporters were actively rounding up provincial councillors to “introduce” Ky. These tactics were apparently aimed at two objectives: to embarrass Thieu publicly by having the Assembly again reject his views; and to create the impression of a groundswell of support for Ky by having a large number of provincial councillors flock to “introduce” his candidacy.

11. On June 2 the Assembly voted 45 to 39 in favor of retaining the requirement for 30 “introductions.” This vote fell short of the majority which is required under Article 45 of the Constitution to override a “request for reconsideration” by the executive. It is not clear whether this article applies in this interim period, however.

12. The question of the 30 “introductions” has thus become a matter of interpretation of the Constitution. The Assembly avoided making any constitutional interpretation by simply reporting its vote to the Directorate. Thieu supporters are known to believe that the Directorate is now free to promulgate the law without the controversial “introduction” provision, but it is by no means certain that Ky and his supporters will go along with that interpretation.⁷

⁷ On June 10 Locke reported that the Directorate had decided the previous day to promulgate the Constitution without the provision requiring formal “introductions” of presidential candidates. (Telegram 27955 from Saigon; *ibid.*)

13. The confused issue of the 30 "introductions" has become further snarled and political tension somewhat heightened by the related issue of the dates of the elections. The Armed Forces Council decided when it accepted the Constitution in late March that the elections for the Presidency and the Senate should be held on September 1 and the elections for the lower house on October 1. General Thieu announced this decision in promulgating the Constitution on April 1. However, the Assembly subsequently voted to set the Presidential elections for September 3 (which is a Sunday, as required in the Constitution) and the Senate on December 17. The Assembly has so far set no date for the lower house elections. One motive for setting the Senate elections on December 17 may have been that to do so prolongs the life of the present Assembly. Another probably more important motive is the fact that moving the Senate election back to December would permit defeated Presidential candidates to file and run for the Senate.

14. In the same letter which requested that the Assembly reconsider the "introduction" provision, the Directorate asked the Assembly to change the election dates back to "early September" for the President and the Senate and "early October" for the lower house. The Assembly voted June 3 against the Directorate's request on the election dates. The leader of the pro-government democratic alliance bloc, Le Phuoc Sang, proposed that a final vote not be taken for several days. When his proposal was voted down, he and about 35 of the bloc's members walked out of the Assembly. The final vote against the Directorate request was taken after the walk-out.

15. Sang explained in the Assembly session of June 6 that the walk-out was to protest the way in which the voting had been conducted; he wanted a roll call vote, not a secret ballot. Sang is scheduled to hold a press conference today on the matter. He and about 35 of his bloc of approximately 55 Deputies are at least temporarily boycotting Assembly sessions, though he said yesterday that his bloc would return to the Assembly at a "favorable time," and I understand from reports today that they will attend the next session. In a counter action, about 8 of Sang's bloc announced their withdrawal from the bloc in protest against Sang's moves.

16. While the question of the 30 "introductions" has become an issue between Thieu and Ky, and their rivalry has thus been projected into the Assembly, the question of the election dates appears to be primarily a matter of pro-government versus "opposition." From the point of view of the military, the matter involves the question of "face" because the dates were set by the Armed Forces Council. We have had several reports that indicate the Directorate is both united and determined on the election dates issue. A letter from General Thieu was delivered to the Assembly June 6 in which he urges speedy dispatch of

the Senate election law to the Directorate so that the Presidential and the Senate laws can be promulgated together. There would be no strong reason to promulgate them together unless the Presidential and Senate elections were held on the same day as proposed by the Directorate. The Thieu letter therefore probably reflects continued government determination to maintain the original dates for the elections. The walk-out of pro-government Deputies and Sang's press conference today may be designed to justify the Directorate's amending the electoral laws.

17. The Assembly voted final approval of the Senate law June 6, without the participation of about 35 of Sang's democratic alliance bloc. Presumably the law will be sent at once to the Directorate. We understand from members of the Directorate staff that a meeting will be held soon to decide government action on the two laws. It could be a difficult session. Assembly reactions to any changes which the Directorate may make in the laws could also cause more friction between the government and "opposition" Deputies.

18. In addition to the maneuvers of Ky's supporters in the Assembly, we have also noted that some of Thieu's remarks have been censored from the local press. Even though Thieu's remarks seemed quite unexceptional, an interview between Thieu and a Japanese correspondent on the question of the candidacies of Ky and Thieu and the effect on the unity of the armed forces was heavily cut from the weekend papers. Thieu will, of course, be aware of this censoring of his comments, and it will not be likely to improve the chances of his coming to some agreement with Ky. Ky has also stated publicly his intention to continue censorship during the campaign. He said in a June 4 interview with *Viet-Nam Press* that "all press articles and reports at home and news dispatches from foreign press concerning the Presidential election to be held in September will be censored if they sow dissent and confusion among the national ranks . . . The government cannot allow the press to publish articles which criticize the candidates personally . . . our country has been divided and we should not deepen this division."

19. I should also report that Thieu told Harry McPherson on June 2 that he thought it would be very good for the country if Tran Van Huong were elected President. He said that the country is tired of military rule, and he added that if a civilian is elected President he will work, whatever his position, to assure the President the full support of the armed forces and to prevent coups. He again implied several times that he is not very hopeful of winning the Presidency himself. This, together with past remarks and some hints we have had from one of Huong's supporters suggests to me that Thieu may be thinking his best bet is to back Huong. His hope in this case would be to eliminate Ky as his major power rival by engineering Ky's defeat in the coming

election, or to use this possibility as bargaining leverage to bring Ky around to a compromise.

20. Although I now fear that the chances of a Thieu–Ky agreement are not very encouraging, as I have said I think we must continue to press for such an agreement as the best possible solution. If in a week or so it becomes clear that there is little or no compromise, we should consider how we might act to resolve the conflict in such a way as to give the least possible jolt to the political health of the nation and the least damage to our freedom of action here.

21. I think, also, we should urge on all candidates the need for post-election cooperation and widest possible participation in the new government.

[Here follows discussion of the security situation in I and II Corps, economic matters, the Chieu Hoi program, casualties, Korean forces, and visiting Congressional delegations.]

Bunker

193. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, June 11, 1967, 10:30 a.m.

Mr. President:

One thought about the Viet Nam problem in the light of our recent Middle East experience.

It was again demonstrated that the Soviet government, on balance—to put it mildly—does not wish us well. I suppose the moderates in the Soviet government were strengthened by the failure of the Soviet Middle East adventure as they were temporarily strengthened by failure in the Cuba missile gambit. And I do think that in this 50th anniversary year the Soviet Union would prefer not to have a major direct confrontation with the U.S. Nevertheless, we must not count on their taking us off the hook in Viet Nam cheaply or easily.

Therefore, if we undertake a peace gambit with the USSR on Viet Nam in the days ahead, as I would be inclined to do, we must do it

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. 1, Misc. Memos. Secret. There is an indication on the memorandum that the President saw it.

against the background that some time during July we may have to up the ante in Viet Nam: with respect to troops and, even, with respect to bombing.

I tried to suggest this in the drafting of the proposed message to Kosygin.²

To make this more credible, we might this week open some kind of conversation on Viet Nam with the Russians, either through a note from you to Kosygin, Secretary Rusk meeting Gromyko in Geneva after NATO, or both.

Then about mid-month Bob McNamara and Bus Wheeler would go to Viet Nam; and it should not be too deeply concealed that they are assessing what may be required to push the war forward hard if we cannot get a diplomatic break soon. In short, without giving the Soviets anything like an ultimatum, they ought to get the feeling that, unless they want to face quite a lot more pressure in Viet Nam, including, quite possibly, increased risks of a confrontation with us in Southeast Asia, they had better try to get more active in Hanoi.

Incidentally, I talked with Sec. Rusk about the Asian Chiefs of State meeting around the 19th. He had had the impression that Holt had thought we had better wait until after the Vietnamese election. He himself thinks it would be unfortunate until Ky and Thieu straighten themselves out; and he believes there are some scheduling problems. In any case, I shall be following through on this tomorrow, Monday, June 12.³

Walt

² This "pen pal" letter, drafted by Rostow on June 9, proposed that the conflict be moved "from the battlefield to the ballot box" and stated that the administration would decrease the tempo of its bombing and re-establish prohibited areas around Hanoi and Haiphong. It presumably was postponed due to Kosygin's announcement that he would come to the United Nations in New York for discussions of the Middle East crisis in the General Assembly. (Ibid., Memos to the President, Walt Rostow, 6/1–8/2/67, Vol. I)

³ From 7:32 to 8:50 p.m. the next day, the Special Committee of the NSC met. Those in attendance in addition to the President and Rostow included Katzenbach, Vance, Helms, Clifford, McGeorge Bundy, Rostow, McNamara, Wheeler, Thompson, Sisco, Warnke, Harold Saunders, Raymond Garthoff, Eugene Rostow, and Henry Fowler. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary) No notes of the meeting have been found. The President discussed the upcoming Kosygin visit during a meeting with Thompson on June 14, and during the weekly luncheon that followed, which Thompson attended. (Ibid.) Notes of these discussions have not been found.

194. Draft Memorandum From Secretary of Defense McNamara to President Johnson¹

Washington, June 12, 1967.

SUBJECT

Summary—Alternative Military Action against North Vietnam

The Joint Chiefs of Staff have recommended a program for intensified US military actions against North Vietnam.² Their program would have as its chief feature heavy attacks upon the Hanoi–Haiphong logistical base, and would include actions such as bombing and mining the ports.

The attached full memorandum analyzes three major alternatives: Alternative A—the JCS proposal to expand the present program to include mining of the ports and attacks on roads and bridges closer to Hanoi and Haiphong; Alternative B—which would continue the present level of attacks but generally restrict it to the neck of North Vietnam south of 20°; and Alternative C—a refinement of the currently approved program.

In the memorandum, Mr. Vance and I:

—Oppose the JCS program (Alternative A) on grounds that it would neither substantially reduce the flow of men and supplies to the South nor pressure Hanoi toward settlement, that it would be costly in American lives and in domestic and world opinion, and that it would run serious risks of enlarging the war into one with the Soviet Union and China, leaving us a few months from now more frustrated and with almost no choice but even further escalation.

—Oppose mere refinement of the present program (Alternative C) on grounds that it would involve most of the costs and some of the risks of Alternative A with less chance than Alternative A of either interdicting supplies or moving Hanoi toward settlement.

—Recommend concentration of the bulk of our efforts on infiltration routes south of 20° (Alternative B) because this course would interdict supplies as effectively as the other alternatives, would cost the least in pilots' lives, and would be consistent with effort to move toward negotiations.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 2EE Primarily McNamara Recommendations. Top Secret; Sensitive. The notations "L" on the summary and the draft memorandum indicate that the President saw them. This DPM is printed in part in *The Pentagon Papers*, The Senator Gravel Edition, pp. 189–191. An attached table of North Vietnamese import capabilities and a list of bombing targets are not printed.

² See Document 141.

Implicit in the recommendation is a conviction that nothing short of toppling the Hanoi regime will pressure North Vietnam to settle so long as they believe they have a chance to win the “war of attrition” in the South, a judgment that actions sufficient to topple the Hanoi regime will put us into war with the Soviet Union and China, and a belief that a shift to Alternative B can be timed and handled in such a way as to gain politically while not endangering the morale of our fighting men.

The Director of Central Intelligence and the Secretaries of the Air Force and Navy have each independently considered the alternative programs. No one of them recommends Alternative A. Mr. Nitze joins with Mr. Vance and me in recommending B; Dr. Brown prefers C; Mr. Helms does not make a specific recommendation, but states the CIA believes that none of the alternatives is capable of decreasing Hanoi’s determination to persist in the war or of reducing the flow of goods sufficiently to affect the war in the South.

Robert S. McNamara

Attachment

Draft Memorandum From Secretary of Defense McNamara to President Johnson

Washington, June 12, 1967.

SUBJECT

Alternative Military Actions Against North Vietnam

This memorandum analyzes three major alternatives: Alternative A—the JCS proposal to expand the present program to include mining of the ports and attacks on roads and bridges close to Hanoi and Haiphong; Alternative B—which would continue the present level of attacks but generally restrict it to the neck of North Vietnam south of 20°; and Alternative C—a refinement of the currently approved program.

I. THE THREE ALTERNATIVES

Alternative A. *Intensified attack on the Hanoi–Haiphong logistical base.* Under this Alternative, we would continue attacks on enemy installations and industry and would conduct an intensified, concurrent and sustained effort against all elements of land, sea and air lines of com-

munication in North Vietnam—especially those entering and departing the Hanoi–Haiphong areas. Foreign shipping would be “shouldered out” of Haiphong by a series of air attacks that close in on the center of the port complex. The harbor and approaches would be mined, forcing foreign shipping out into the nearby estuaries for offloading by lighterage. Intensive and systematic armed reconnaissance would be carried out against the roads and railroads from China (especially the northeast railroad), against coastal shipping and coastal transshipment locations, and against all other land lines of communication. The eight major operational airfields would be systematically attacked, and the deep-water ports of Cam Pha and Hon Gai would be struck or mined as required. Alternative A could be pursued full-force between now and September (thereafter the onset of unfavorable weather conditions would seriously impair operations).

Alternative B: *Emphasis on the infiltration routes south of the 20th Parallel*. Under this alternative, the dominant emphasis would be, not on preventing matériel from flowing *into* North Vietnam (and thus not on “economic” pressure on the regime), but on preventing military men and matériel from flowing *out of* the North into the South. We would terminate bombing in the Red River basin except for occasional sorties (perhaps 3%)—those necessary to keep enemy air defenses and damage-repair crews positioned there and to keep important fixed targets knocked out. The same total number of sorties envisioned under Alternative A—together with naval gunfire at targets ashore and afloat and mining of inland waterways, estuaries and coastal waters—would be concentrated in the neck of North Vietnam, between 17° and 20°, through which all land infiltration must pass and in which the “extended battle zone” north of the DMZ lies. The effort would be intensive and sustained, designed especially to saturate choke points and to complement similar new intensive interdiction efforts in adjacent areas in Laos and near the 17th Parallel inside South Vietnam.

Alternative C. *Extension of the current program*. This alternative would be essentially a refinement of the currently approved program and therefore a compromise between Alternative A and Alternative B. Under it, while avoiding attacks within the 10-mile prohibited zone around Hanoi and strikes at or mining of the ports, we would conduct a heavy effort against all other land, sea, and air lines of communication. Important fixed targets would be kept knocked out; intensive, sustained and systematic armed reconnaissance would be carried out against the roads and railroads and coastal shipping throughout the country; and the eight major airfields would be systematically attacked. The total number of sorties would be the same as under the other two alternatives.

Mr. Vance and I recommend Alternative B.

The *Joint Chiefs of Staff* recommend Alternative A.³

The *Secretary of the Navy* recommends Alternative B.

The *Secretary of the Air Force* recommends Alternative C modified to add some targets (especially LOC targets) to the present list and to eliminate others.

The *Director of the CIA* does not make a recommendation. The CIA judgment is that none of the alternatives is capable of decreasing Hanoi's determination to persist in the war or of reducing the flow of goods sufficiently to affect the war in the South.

II. GENERAL SITUATION IN VIETNAM

The alternative programs of military actions against the North must be viewed in their total context:

In South Vietnam, the combat operations have reached a high level of intensity with only slow progress by friendly forces, a situation which it is within the power of the enemy to perpetuate; likewise, the pacification campaign is making little progress; the government is still largely corrupt, incompetent and unresponsive to the needs and wishes of the people; and only first and halting steps toward national reconciliation have been taken. On the encouraging side, there is movement toward constitutional government, jeopardized somewhat by the military-civilian and Ky–Thieu conflicts. The attitude of the American public toward the Vietnam war, because of the rising US casualty rate and the increasing proportion of losses being suffered by US as compared with South Vietnamese forces, is one of substantial disfavor.

III. OVER-ALL US OBJECTIVE AND BOMBING SUB-OBJECTIVES

Any program of action against the North must be viewed, furthermore, in terms of its relation to the single, limited US over-all objective in Vietnam and to the sub-objectives underlying the US bombing program. The limited over-all US objective, in terms of the narrow US *commitment* and not of wider US *preferences*, is to take action (so long as they continue to help themselves) to see that the people of South Vietnam are permitted to determine their own future. Our commitment is to stop (or generously to offset when we cannot stop) North Vietnamese military intervention in the South, so that "the board will not be tilted" against Saigon in an internal South Vietnamese contest for

³ JCSM-286-67 20 May 1967. [Footnote in the source text. See Document 187.]

control.⁴ The sub-objectives, at which our bombing campaign in the North has always been aimed, are these:

- (1) To retaliate and to lift the morale of the people in the South, including Americans, who are being attacked by agents of the North;
- (2) To add to the pressure on Hanoi to end the war;
- (3) To reduce the flow and/or to increase the cost of infiltrating men and matériel from North to South.

The three alternative courses of action against North Vietnam must be compared on the basis of their respective contributions to (or deductions from) this US over-all objective and these US bombing sub-objectives.

IV. ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVE A

The present proposal of the JCS has its background in Rolling Thunder 56, the expansion of the bombing program over North Vietnam which was approved in early May. Before it was approved, General Wheeler said: "The bombing campaign is reaching the point where we will have struck all worthwhile fixed targets except the ports. At this time we will have to address the requirement to deny the DRV the use of the ports." Except for the port areas and a few targets in heavily populated areas, all that remains are minor targets, restrikes of certain major targets, and armed reconnaissance of the lines of communication (LOCs). Against this background, the JCS have submitted their recommendation (Alternative A).

Although the three alternatives would each involve about the same number of sorties against the North, Alternative A, unlike the other

⁴ Much of the disagreement in the US Government over courses of action stems from different views as to what the US objective, or commitment, is. The JCS, for example, call my statement of US commitment a "modification of present US objectives . . . [which] would undermine and no longer provide a complete rationale for our presence in South Vietnam or much of our effort over the past two years." (JCSM-307-67 1 June 1967.) If the US commitment is as I have described it (which is essentially as it has been stated by you, Secretary Rusk, Ambassador Goldberg and me over the past few years), one has good grounds to question the rationale for even more US effort in Vietnam. Specifically, US efforts against the North should take account of the fact that the Viet Cong in the South now receive from North Vietnam perhaps 1/5th to 1/10th as much assistance in men and 1/1000th as much assistance in matériel as the Saigon Government receives from the US and other third countries. The approximately \$17 billion of matériel sent by the US to Vietnam annually is 1000 times the estimated \$15–20 million of matériel sent to the South from North Vietnam (and approximately 25 times as much as the \$720 million the USSR and China are estimated to have given North Vietnam in 1966). The 54,000 third-nation troops in South Vietnam alone exceed the number of North Vietnamese soldiers in regular units in the South, while the 500,000 total of US plus third-country manpower is about 10 times the number in North Vietnamese regular units and at least five times the number of infiltrated North Vietnamese now in the South. [Footnote and brackets in the source text.]

two, would hit targets significantly different from, and more sensitive than, those at which the bombing campaign has heretofore been directed. It would be regarded as continuing the pattern of escalation in the air campaign. The proponents of Alternative A present it as designed to achieve all three of the bombing sub-objectives mentioned above.

[Here follows McNamara's assessment of Alternative A, in which he argued first that an escalation in bombing would not improve the morale of the GVN. In addition, he did not believe that additional bombing would deter the DRV from its goal of unification. As for the increased interdiction impact that would arise under this alternative, McNamara denied that any level of increase would reduce the flow of arms and men southward to a level below that necessary to sustain the VC insurgency. As well, an escalation in bombing would have little impact on the war-making capacity of the North. Negative results would occur in terms of the cost to the United States of the lives of its pilots and troops, adverse domestic and world opinion, and the heightened risk of a strong reaction from the Communist bloc.]

V. ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVE B

Alternative B would shift most of the bombing away from the Red River basin and concentrate the bulk of our effort on infiltration routes in the southern neck of North Vietnam south of 20°.

It reflects a belief that the outcome of the war hinges on what happens in the South, that neither military defeat nor military victory is in the cards there no matter which alternative is chosen against the North, that the cost of both Alternatives A and C, especially in pilots' lives, would be excessive, and that Alternative A would risk expanding the war dangerously, leaving us a few months from now more frustrated and with almost no choice but even further escalation. Alternative B is designed to improve the negotiating environment by combining continued progress in the South (attacks against VC/NVA main force units and slow improvements in pacification that may follow the new constitution, the national reconciliation proclamation, and the Vietnamese elections this fall) with a restrained program against the North.

Proponents of Alternative B believe that we are in a military situation that cannot be changed materially by expanding our military effort, that the politico-pacification situation in South Vietnam will improve only slowly, and that Hanoi will therefore persevere. These proponents favor a calm drive to settle the war—a deliberate process on four fronts: The Rolling Thunder front in the North, and the large-unit, politico-pacification, and diplomatic fronts in the South. The Alternative B approach against the North is to maximize interdiction

while minimizing loss of life, risk of escalation, and impediments to negotiations; in the South, the approach is to maintain the initiative on the large-unit front, to move on with pacification efforts and with the national election in September, and to initiate periodic peace probes.

[Here follows McNamara's evaluation of Alternative B, in which he contended that concentrating bombing near the DMZ would not impair in any significant way the enemy's ability to continue to carry the war southward. Public reaction would be negative as long as the bombing continued. In addition, aircraft and pilot losses might still be high if the DRV shifted its air defense system to the area. The morale of U.S. troops, let alone the GVN and its soldiers, might be dampened and the Communist side might be encouraged by this scale-back.]

VI. ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVE C

Alternative C—essentially a continuation of the current program—serves none of our positive objectives.⁵ This alternative does not contain enough pressure to persuade Hanoi to settle the war (although some believe that it contains so much bombing that it will keep the North Vietnamese *away* from the conference table). This alternative does not put a meaningful ceiling on the flow of men and matériel into the South (although it diverts sorties from the infiltration routes in the funnel between 17° and 20°, where they could help the war in the South most). The cost of the program, in lost pilots, is high. And it lacks the political advantages of Alternative B.

Alternative C has but two arguments in its favor: It avoids the most serious risks in Alternative A of escalation into a larger war, and it avoids the risk in Alternative B of what may appear (if the shift is mishandled) to be a conspicuous admission of failure of the bombing program.

⁵ The Secretary of the Air Force argues for Alternative C (modified). He believes that our air interdiction effort has had some effect in reducing infiltration below what it otherwise would have been. He believes that Alternative A, from the purely military point of view, would be worth its extra cost in terms of reduced enemy abilities in South Vietnam; but he considers port closure too risky and believes that, with the ports open to handle diverted imports, attacks on the northeast and the northwest roads and railroads should be limited to harassment. At the same time, he opposes Alternative B on the ground that it would give Hanoi a "free ride" down to 20°; this, in his view, would more than offset the increased effectiveness to be expected from Alternative B's added anti-infiltration effort south of 20°. He believes that US pilot-loss rates, after the enemy has been given 3–6 months to adjust his AAA, will not be significantly different under Alternatives B and C. He consequently recommends continuation of the present program—including strikes on airfields (except Gia Lam) as necessary to minimize over-all losses in the air campaign—with refinements to add some targets (especially LOC targets) to the present list and to eliminate others. [Footnote in the source text.]

The concern of our field commanders with bombing restrictions is well expressed by a message from Admiral Sharp after he received his instruction regarding the 10-mile prohibited area around Hanoi: "We have repeatedly sought to obtain authority for a systematic air campaign directed against carefully selected targets whose destruction and constant disruption would steadily increase the pressure on Hanoi. It seems unfortunate that just when the pressure is increasing by virtue of such an air campaign, and the weather is optimum over northern NVN, we must back off." (CINCPAC 290506Z May 67)⁶

VII. RECOMMENDATION

I am convinced that, within the limits to which we can go with prudence, "strategic" bombing of North Vietnam will at best be unproductive. I am convinced that mining the ports would not only be unproductive but very costly in domestic and world support and very dangerous—running high risks of enlarging the war as the program is carried out and almost certainly leaving us, when it has been carried out, frustrated and with no choice but to escalate further. At the same time, I am doubtful that bombing the infiltration routes north or south of 20° will put a meaningful ceiling on men or matériel entering South Vietnam. Nevertheless, I recommend Alternative B (which emphasizes bombing the area between 17° and 20°) because (1) it holds highest promise of serving a military purpose, (2) it will cost the least in pilots' lives, and (3) it is consistent with efforts to move toward negotiations.

Implicit in the recommendation is a conviction that nothing short of toppling the Hanoi regime will pressure North Vietnam to settle so long as they believe they have a chance to win the "war of attrition" in the South, a judgment that actions sufficient to topple the Hanoi regime will put us into war with the Soviet Union and China, and a belief that a shift to Alternative B can be timed and handled in such a way as to gain politically while not endangering the morale of our fighting men.

Robert S. McNamara

⁶ Not found.

195. Memorandum of Conversation¹

Washington, June 13, 1967.

SUBJECT

Report on Ambassador Diem's Visit to Saigon

PARTICIPANTS

H. E. Bui Diem—Vietnamese Ambassador

Mr. William P. Bundy—Assistant Secretary—EA

Mr. Philip C. Habib—EA

1. Ambassador Diem had returned from three weeks in Saigon on the night of Monday, June 12. The Prime Minister had instructed him to come in and "report" to us on recent events in Saigon. The Prime Minister had asked him to get back to Saigon within a week or so. Diem was hoping to stay a little longer in Washington before returning.

2. Diem commented that the Middle East crisis appears to have ended up in a way which is beneficial to the Vietnamese problem. In his view Hanoi had been in a hurry to back the Arabs, not having expected the Israelis to move so quickly. There may be some inclination to put the blame on the Russians. Diem believed that the Middle Eastern crisis had opened the eyes of some of the international critics of American policy who would now have to think things over more carefully. During a stopover in Tokyo he had received the distinct impression from conversations with government officials and Parliamentarians that they now feel that while it is easy to criticize American policy it is not so easy to find a solution. This was related to Middle East developments and many people who are critical of American support for Viet-Nam urged US intervention in Israel. At any rate attention was focused on the Middle East and if the Vietnamese situation didn't tense up this might provide time for the situation in Viet-Nam to improve. Diem clarified this remark by referring to the concentration of official and press criticism on the performance of the Vietnamese Army. Unfavorable remarks about the efficiency of the Vietnamese Army are a cause of concern to Prime Minister Ky, General Vien and others. Basically, the criticism has focused on the weaknesses of the 25th, 5th and 18th Divisions. The Prime Minister would like to solve the problem but it is becoming something of a cause celebre which makes it more difficult to move against particularly incompetent officers. Mr. Bundy asked whether the incompetence in these Divisions was at the com-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, EA/VN Files: Lot 71 D 88, Memcons of Amb. Diem, 1967. Drafted by Philip Habib.

mand level or generally throughout the officer group. Diem replied that in the case of the 25th Division the problem was to replace General Chinh, whereas in the 5th Division there was a good deal of talk of corruption which was checked out and which turned out to be that the Commander was not so much to blame as were his underlings. The Prime Minister intended to take measures at the proper time. Diem had pointed out to the Prime Minister that the international press knows about the inefficiencies of these Divisions which furthers the impression that Vietnamese troops are no good while US troops are in the thick of the fighting. Fortunately press attention has moved away from this problem but it can be expected to return.

3. Diem said that in his observation the Prime Minister was not so preoccupied with politics as to forget about the need for improved efficiency in the Government and the furtherance of the pacification program. His desire to push these programs goes beyond, although it is related to, the need for showing improvement before the September elections. Mr. Bundy asked if there was a feeling of "attentisme" among the Vietnamese officials in light of the coming elections. Diem said this was unavoidable but the Prime Minister was trying to minimize it. He was well aware of the need to show progress along all fronts, both military and civilian.

4. Diem said that the problems of the National Assembly were occupying the Prime Minister. It was Ky's firm intention to abide by the decisions of the Assembly and to work in full cooperation with it. At the present time the members of the Assembly are emotional in their attitudes and it is difficult to get a consensus but Ky was going to work with and through the Assembly. There were a number of issues involving strong feelings on the part of the Directorate and the Assembly. On the question of the requirement for a Presidential candidate to be presented by thirty elected representatives, this was no problem for Ky who could get thirty or more. The Directorate, however, opposed the measure as did the Catholics. Ky was trying to be neutral and Diem did not believe this would be a major problem.

5. A second issue between the Assembly and the Directorate involved the question of the Presidential candidates going through a run-off procedure unless a minimum percentage of the vote was secured. The Prime Minister understood the U.S. point of view on the desirability of a run-off and he was basically in agreement. However, he believed after careful analysis that if a run-off were to be provided for at this time it would produce maneuvering which would be detrimental to an honest election. At any rate the issue seemed to be resolved and there would be no run-off.

6. The date of the elections remained a bone of contention. The Directorate wished Presidential and Upper House elections to be held

on the third of September whereas the law as passed by the Assembly provides for Upper House elections on the 17th of December. The Prime Minister has always wanted these elections to be held together and has made his position clear. There will be further examinations and further discussion between the Government and the Assembly.

7. Diem said that all of this debate was in an atmosphere which had generated strong emotional reaction against the Assembly among certain members of the Directorate and in particular he cited Thieu and Chieu. Some people in the Directorate wished to convene the Armed Forces Congress to over-ride the Assembly but Ky had said that this was impossible. The Constitution had been promulgated and the Armed Forces could not be convened for this purpose. He intends to stick by this opinion and abide by Assembly decisions. Diem believes that in the end all the Generals will agree and that the problems will be worked out. He thinks Ky is maintaining as strong a hand as necessary to assure continuing functioning of the Assembly. Election laws for the first round of elections will be ready before the filing date which is July 15. (Embassy Saigon reports filing date is June 30.)

8. Mr. Bundy asked how things were between Thieu and Ky. Diem said he would like to tell the whole story. He had had a long conversation with Thieu and many conversations with Ky and other Generals while in Saigon. He was sorry not to be able to bring back a concrete result. Diem said that when he got to Saigon a number of Generals came to tell him of Thieu's intention to run. He had asked whether this had been by prior arrangement. After discussing the matter with Thieu, Bui Diem discovered that there was considerable misunderstanding between Thieu and the others. According to Thieu he believed that at the time of the promulgation of the Constitution on April 1, the question of his candidacy for the Presidency had been discussed within the Armed Forces Congress and in an "unofficial way" they were prepared to back Thieu. Thieu then went to the hospital where he had a minor operation and was working on his plans for the campaign. A few days later General Thang came to see Thieu and said that on the authority of the majority of the Generals and speaking on their behalf, mentioning them by name, he wanted to say that Ky had a better chance to win and Thieu would be better off not to run. This was a blow to Thieu who was flabbergasted listening to Thang. Thieu thought he had the backing of the officers and now he felt deceived and this was the beginning of the trouble. Diem had talked to the other Generals who claimed that it wasn't true that they had told Thieu they would back him. They had just been polite about their attitude toward Thieu. It was not true that they had been deceitful; they just simply thought that Ky had a better chance. Thieu continued to feel deceived, an attitude which was furthered by ill-considered censorship of his statements by General Tri. Diem had gone to see Thieu to convey the feelings of the

others. He told Thieu that it was not his impression that the Generals were against him but that they preferred to back one man who had the best chance and would do anything they could to get Thieu to change his mind. Thieu said it was a matter of prestige. Diem had asked what might be done to repair the situation and Thieu said he would think it over but he assured Diem that he would do nothing to harm the unity of the Army nor the stability of the country nor would he do anything to harm Ky. Thieu said he knew he would not have a chance to win but his candidacy was a matter of conscience. Diem then talked to Ky who agreed to see Thieu and beg him to withdraw for the sake of unity. It was Diem's definite impression that Thieu had been hurt morally and was reacting out of bitterness.

9. Mr. Bundy asked if this bitterness could be reduced. Diem said yes, that Tri had been told to be more careful and that Thang and the others were asked to make some gestures toward Thieu for the sake of unity. Nevertheless before Diem had left Saigon he was told that Thieu would announce his candidacy by the 15th of June.² This would not necessarily be a final and formal announcement but it would be firmer than hitherto. Thieu's brother Kieu had been reassuring Bui Diem that even a formal announcement wouldn't mean that there could be no change and a withdrawal later on. Diem felt that this was still possible even given Thieu's bitterness.

10. Diem said that Ky had asked him to report these facts here and to report them even to the President if necessary. Ky felt that he had to run, that he had been urged by people inside and outside the Armed Forces to be a candidate. These people found Thieu indecisive which was the main reason almost all of them prefer Ky. Ky felt compelled to announce and before doing so he had talked to Thieu. He believed that he had Thieu's tacit agreement. Thieu had told Ky to go ahead with his candidacy. Seeing that this was after Thang had seen Thieu he went ahead. Diem said that he was sorry that things had developed the way they had. The issues looked personal and petty but unfortunately human beings were involved. Mr. Bundy asked what the outlook was. Diem said that ideally Thieu should withdraw and Ky would be the only candidate. It was not possible for Ky to withdraw. The organization for his election was being set up and the other Generals would be "deceived" if he withdrew. The door is still open to Thieu's withdrawal. It depends largely on Ky who has "not broken his bridges" to Thieu as had the other Generals. Ky would have to go to Thieu and the two of them make whatever arrangement is necessary to secure Thieu's withdrawal. Diem said that if Thieu withdraws the tension will ease. However if Thieu goes ahead out of bitterness Diem

² He did so on June 15.

thinks the situation is not as worrisome as we might expect. Of course the military vote will be split but he did not believe there would be any danger to the unity of the Army. Thieu had told Diem and asked him to say in Washington that Thieu will do anything for the sake of unity and will do nothing that could be construed as division. He would take no action by arms or words to weaken the unity of the Army and the stability of the country. So Diem has come to the conclusion that it would be unfortunate to have two military candidates but it will not cause unmanageable divisions within the Army.

11. Mr. Bundy asked how it could be kept from doing that. Diem replied that General Vien will keep the Army aside from the controversy and that Ky will agree to the Army being kept out of the machinery of politics. It is true that a candidate from an incumbent administration will find it difficult to keep that administration out of politics but the Prime Minister would be careful to operate "normally" and this would help ward off any divisions inside the Army and civil administration.

12. Diem said that in addition to the problem of military unity there was also a question of how to conduct fair, honest elections. The Prime Minister was well-intentioned but good intentions sometimes do not control men. There were also problems of censorship with the provision of equal facilities for civilian candidates. On censorship the Prime Minister had definite ideas. He did not believe that the campaign should concern itself with issues that should be avoided because they create dangerous dissension. In particular he spoke of religious and regional factors. In his opinion the candidates should reach a consensus on how to conduct the campaign and then abide by it. As far as censorship was concerned Ky was willing to have representatives of the various candidates on the censorship boards so that common approval could be secured. Diem felt that Ky was determined to conduct a fair election as he had just recently assured Congressman Dow and Senator Hart³ but of course intention and ability were different things when it came to controlling people down the line.

13. This led Diem to discuss the subject of General Loan with the parenthetical remark that this was an embarrassing subject but there was nothing to hide. Diem said that he had met with Loan in the presence of Ky and discussed the problem frankly. He cited the various rumors of Loan's activities and the consensus. The Prime Minister had agreed with Diem and had asked Loan to re-examine his machinery with a view to controlling the men under him. Diem said that Loan was not a bad man but that he had too many hats and could not con-

³ Representative John G. Dow (D-NY) and Senator Philip A. Hart (D-MI).

trol all of his men. Ky wanted an honest election and recognizes the crucial importance of Viet-Nam in following a bad path or setting a bad example for the future. Everyone agrees in principle.

14. Mr. Bundy referred to the Thieu–Ky problem and asked if a real talk had yet taken place between them. Diem said no, that he had tried to pave the way but when they met they avoided talking about ugly things.⁴ There was some attempt at trying to reach a prior understanding but he had not succeeded. He had talked to Thieu about his returning to the Army or taking the presidency of the Upper House but had received no reaction. Diem said that Ambassador Bunker had asked if there were anything he could do. At the time Diem felt it was preferable to let the matter be worked out among the Vietnamese. He was wondering if that was still valid or whether or not it would be preferable for Ambassador Bunker to go further. Diem knows that Thieu had been hurt in his conversation with General Westmoreland which he understood as a US suggestion for withdrawal.⁵ Diem believed that Ambassador Bunker should concentrate on Ky at this stage to get Ky to talk frankly with Thieu, making whatever offers were necessary for an amicable settlement. Once Ky had done this then the Ambassador might talk to Thieu.

15. Diem feels that Thieu is acting impulsively. He knows he can't win but nevertheless he goes ahead. However, there was still room for maneuver even if the public announcement took place and the situation could clear up by the day candidacies had to be filed.

16. Diem then referred to a conversation that Ky had had with Tran Van Huong. The two men had mutual respect for each other and had spoken frankly. Huong had told Ky that they could not be running mates in either order but that both should run.⁶ They did not talk in specific terms but they came out with a general understanding that whoever wins would consider the other for the position of Prime Minister. Diem thought this would be a good combination but he cautioned against any optimism; that there would eventually be a lot of people around each of the men who would be opposed to this. Diem closed by repeating again that the Prime Minister had asked him to report

⁴ Diem attempted to continue his mediation of the dispute. In telegram 27182 from Saigon, June 8, Bunker reported that he heard from Diem that Thieu and Ky at some point did talk "amicably but without a solution emerging." They met each other only with other Generals present, and pledged to talk again. Thieu later told Diem that he would stand by his promise not to split the military. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S) In telegram 27982 from Saigon, June 11, Bunker reported that Diem stated before he left for Washington that the situation was "under control" and that "no untoward steps would be taken by the principals or those immediately around them." (Ibid.)

⁵ See Document 163.

⁶ Huong announced his Presidential candidacy on May 26.

faithfully in Washington and to give his assurances about the conduct of the campaign. Although the Vietnamese people are in a stage of political immaturity and have suffered from communist actions, it is difficult to have normal elections, but he could assure us that as far as the Prime Minister was concerned they will do their best to get the maximum honesty possible and the absence of blatant irregularities. Mr. Bundy pointed out that it wasn't only in the interest of international acceptance of the elections but it was terribly important also from the standpoint of the Vietnamese people who are shrewd and who would know what was going on. Bui Diem said there was a question of equilibrium. If the Government was too liberal or if it was too crude there could be a great deal of difficulty. He hoped that Ky would handle it with his customary honesty and sincerity.

196. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam¹

Washington, June 13, 1967, 1:31 p.m.

210584. 1. We have noted in your latest reporting that the Thieu-Ky confrontation does not seem to be moving toward satisfactory resolution and that opposing positions appear to be increasingly firm. Bui Diem's comment that Thieu may declare his candidacy formally on June 15 would appear to establish some sort of deadline. Diem's departure (he reached here late last night) and Kieu's leaving the scene might create a gap in communication between Thieu and Ky. Obviously if Thieu formally declares his candidacy on the 15th, positions will become more rigid and the chance for a negotiated amicable settlement between them decreases.

2. Your previous reporting indicated that you believed it desirable to allow the forces in motion to work themselves out, reserving your own direct intervention to that time you considered it essential. Has our forbearance led Thieu to believe we have no objection to dual candidacies or to his own candidacy in place of Ky?

3. We still believe, as we take it you do, that avoidance of dual military candidacies is most desirable. We note, however, that Ky and

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Immediate; Exdis. Drafted and approved by Habib and cleared by Bundy, Miller, and Carver.

Diem have been seeking to downplay the consequences of such a development and have been supported in this judgment by other Ky supporters like General Khang. What is your personal assessment of the consequences of dual candidacies in view of the opinions and positions that have appeared to emerge as the maneuvering has been taking place? How would the military leadership, as reflected in the Armed Forces Congress, line up in the event that Thieu persists in his desire to run? How would such a situation affect military unity, civilian candidate prospects, and conduct of elections? Can Thieu be diverted and through what specific offers that Ky could be expected or persuaded to make?

4. We believe that you are in the best position to judge whether it is necessary for you to intervene directly, when to do so and through what medium. Would appreciate receiving from you on an urgent basis your current assessment and plan of action.

Katzenbach

197. Memorandum From the President's Special Counsel
(McPherson) to President Johnson¹

Washington, June 13, 1967, 8:15 p.m.

For the President

These impressions of Vietnam should obviously be discounted by several factors:

—this was my first trip, and so I have no previous standard against which to measure my judgments.

—being there two weeks is just enough time for heroes to be discovered and discarded, and not enough time to identify the long-term trends that will determine the future.

—a VIP traveller is exposed to the “winning” situations, and as a result his natural instinct is to listen harder to the skeptics than to the optimists.

—I am neither a military nor a geopolitical strategist; what I thought especially important may only have been incidental, and vice versa.

This said, here is what I saw and came to believe.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Memos to the President, Walt Rostow, 6/1–8/2/67, Vol. I. No classification marking. McPherson visited Vietnam from late May through early June. The notation “L” on the memorandum indicates that the President saw it.

A. The colossal size of our effort.

The first and last thing you come to understand is that the big issue on the campuses, *whether* we should be in Vietnam or not, is almost beside the point. We *are* there in such enormous force, in such totality, that the fact of our presence is where you start from.

At 1500 feet in a Huey on any given afternoon, you look out on two or three Eagle flights of choppers going in to chase VC's; an air strike in progress; artillery "prepping" another area; a division camp here, a battalion forward area there; trucks moving on a dozen roads.

Flying north along the road to Danang, you see why the highway is secure: great areas have been scraped off the hilltops every five miles or so, ringed by 105's² and covered with tanks and tents. We have just about paved the road-side for a hundred miles.

B. The quality of our people.

I am sure that America has never committed so much of its talent to a single military or political operation. The officers I spoke with were, by and large, superb professionals, and some of them had a sense that this war is far more complex, and its issues far more difficult, than could be addressed by military firepower alone. This was particularly true of the Army—surely because the Army has the main job of advising the ARVN and dealing with the frustrating human problems of security and pacification.

We have a number of civilians in Vietnam who have been there for years, whose commitment is total, and who tend to discount the virtues of any new "way" to win the war and secure the peace. They have seen many bright flags go up, and come down, tattered and spoiled, within a few months.

The military tend to defend the status quo, that is, whatever is being done at the moment. The embassy people tend to be absorbed in specific political questions—who is down and who is up in Saigon. Neither group seems to be looking for a new kind of politics, a politics of programs instead of personalities.

It may be that Ambassador Bunker, working with Lilienthal, can inspire that kind of politics in the Saigon government. He has a number of civilians in OCO, and some military advisors with the ARVN, who can support him in that effort, and are anxious to do so.

My impression is that most of the military have "accepted" revolutionary development as an assignment, but only in their heads; their hearts are committed to the shooting war against the VC main forces. The OCO people—Komer excluded—seem to be hesitant about occu-

² 105-mm artillery.

pying the driver's seat and calling for more effort in the unglamorous pacification campaign. Being loyal by nature and training, the military will do their part in assisting revolutionary development, but there will be many occasions in which questions of priority will be difficult. It will require constant pressure from here to keep the pacification effort at the fore-front.

One last observation about the quality of our people. An old master sergeant told me that "there never has been an army like this. Our kids out here are the finest soldiers we ever put on a battlefield—and I went through World War II and Korea with some mighty good units. These boys don't wave the flag, but they do their job better than soldiers have ever done it." From what I saw, I'm sure he must be right.

I would recommend that thought be given to extending the tour of some officers and men—particularly those who are serving as ARVN advisors. One year is more than enough for the foot soldier. It is too short for those who must do the sometimes satisfying, often infuriating job of dealing with an alien military force, whose customs and experience are not only different from ours, but pose constant obstacles to military efficiency.

C. The quality of RVN people.

Bill Jorden and I had a long dinner with Ky one night, and I had another hour with him before I left. I also had an hour and a half with Thieu. I did not meet Huong or Suu, the two principal civilian candidates.

With Ky and Thieu, I talked chiefly about the "new politics" of programs instead of personalities, and about corruption. They made all the right sounds; they were for the first and against the second. (Bunker rightly says this is the problem, whether they are only making the right sounds and haven't the will or the intention of performing; whether, as he puts it, they are smooth, or only slick.)

Whatever the case, Ky is, as you know, disarmingly candid, and his ambition, which is almost unlimited, could be the engine of progress for Vietnam, as well as glory for himself.

When I talked of the need for program, and said I thought the American people would more willingly support a man with a vision for his people than someone who had only won a fight for power, Ky said "We'll all have a program. We'll all sound like Roosevelts. The question is, who could carry it out? The civilians are too old, and I don't know what General Thieu wants." It was unnecessary for him to say who could carry out a program of reform.

When I talked of corruption—which I was told is almost universal throughout the government, from the police check-point to the license office, from the district chief to the corps commander and prob-

ably the ministries in Saigon—he said, “Most of the generals are corrupt. Most of the senior officials in the provinces are corrupt. But getting at corruption takes time. And you must remember that corruption exists everywhere, and people can live with some of it. You live with it in Chicago and New York.” I accepted this at the dinner, shortly after I arrived in Vietnam, but when he repeated it at the end of my visit I said “I don’t think you have all that time. And I don’t think you can stand even as much corruption as we have in the States. We have a government that people have given their loyalty to, and we can absorb some corruption. The problem here is that people have not given their loyalty to the national government, and I don’t think they will so long as officials of that government leech on them day and night.” He agreed at once, which was a bit disconcerting—too much like the old Asian game of saying yes to whatever the colonial westerner wants. I said I thought a real national leader could create a powerful constituency if he convinced the people that between them—between the leader at the top and the people at the bottom—they could crush the sons-of-bitches in the middle who were sapping the strength of people. His eyes lit up for a moment, and he said, “Yes, yes”—but then he thought of the trouble that would entail, and he said “But it takes time to get them out. You must be patient.”

I met a few province chiefs and district chiefs; they were generally present at briefings in the field, but either through embarrassment over their lack of English or the American’s impatience with their slowness, they did no briefing themselves. This is unwise. Whenever a military or civilian VIP travels through Vietnam, our people should make a point of having ARVN officers or civilian personnel take an active part in the briefing. Otherwise it is only an American show; and the war in Vietnam is not only an American show. I made a point of this to MACV.

Everyone I talked to rated the ARVN soldier as “good, if he is well led.” Of course the problem is just that—honest and devoted leadership.

I heard many expressions of contempt for the Popular Forces and Regional Forces, the fellows who man the triangular French-style forts around the hamlets. But most of those expressions came from American military in Saigon. Our officers in the field, and our OCO civilians, gave them higher marks. The difference in judgment stems from a difference in concept: in Saigon the view is that the PF and RF should do more patrolling and ambushing; in the field, people are more inclined to admire these semi-trained men for staying in the forts at all, and to mark their successes in fights with the VC, rather than their failures.

Most of our chips in the pacification field are riding on the revolutionary development program. I had a good talk with General Thang, who runs it; he says he wants to quit, but Komer believes he can be talked out of it. I asked him if the problem was lack of support from Ky and Thieu. "The problem is not what they say," he said, in almost the same words Bunker had used, "but what they do."³

I spent a whole day at the RD training center in Vung Tau, with Major Nguyen Be, the director of the school and one of the fathers of the program. He is a charismatic figure. I liked him instinctively and I was surprised at the intensity of his convictions. He sees RD as truly revolutionary, as creating the basis for a popular democracy, and he fears the program will be blunted and perhaps destroyed "when those in the power structure learn what it is we are trying to do—give the people power." I had some sign of this from Thieu, who said "better educated and more patriotic people—Army people—ought to be put in charge of every RD team."

Over 55,000 cadre have been turned out of Vung Tau. How well they are doing is hard to say. They are supposed to move into hamlets in 59-man teams; the average size of the teams in place, however, is about 30. The rest just leave. Hamlet life is boring; the pay of a cadre is poor (3500 piastres a month, or \$35) and the teams often run into Vietnam's endemic problem—corruption or lack of interest at the province level.

I saw teams in some hamlets that had made some forward movement, at least according to their charts. I heard of others where progress existed solely in the words of the team leader, and where nothing had changed. An American whose insights seemed right to me said, "Nothing can really work unless there is *political* change. RD has been tried before, under Diem; almost everything has been tried. But until there is a government in Saigon that can gain the people's trust, and make its will felt in the provinces, all of these schemes will break apart on the same old rocks: suspicion of the government, corrupt officials, lack of response by those in a position to help."

Still, Major Be and his instructors believe in the program, and they are working at it seven days a week. If the ARVN cooperate with the cadres, *without* dominating them—which in my opinion would distort the whole RD effort—RD can become the base on which a more secure and hopeful country can be built.

D. Politics

Fred Weyand, the fine general who is just getting this third star, said "Before I came out here a year and a half ago, I thought we were

³ See Document 189.

at zero. I was wrong. We were at minus fifty. *Now* we are at zero." That was my impression, on this first visit. I think we have created a vacuum, and pushed the VC out of a great many places they controlled. Now the question is, what's going to fill the vacuum?

It could be the VC; though they are hurt, I think they are still strong enough to do it. It could be us, with another 200,000 troops. But if it is us, what follows when we leave? This is a constant dilemma in Vietnam: how much to run the show, and run it well, as we can; how much to hang back and try to bring the government along, frustrating as that is. One day we must leave; but we cannot leave until the RVN is strong enough and respected enough to take our place as the controlling factor in Vietnam.

Today, most Vietnamese are politically inert. The common judgment is that not more than 10 to 20 percent of the people would voluntarily cast their lot with the VC. Another 20 percent would go with the RVN. That leaves 60 percent "don't knows." An astute young civilian who has lived in the Delta for the last three years, studying VC morale, says "If there were an election in this province, with one VC candidate, one RVN candidate, and one man who said to hell with both of them, the latter would win."

RVN must erase the image of its past behavior. Some officers and civilians are trying to do this, urged on by American advisors.

There must be visible and direct action against corruption. Today, complaints about corruption are quashed as they move up the line. There is an elaborate process of pay-offs that sees to this. People know this, and while they may endure it, they obviously will not give their loyalty to a system that perpetuates it. The most infuriating practice of all is that of arresting those who complain about corruption as "possible VC."

The supply of social services must be made more responsive. It takes forever to get action on urgent needs in the hamlets, and there is plenty of rake-off as the goods finally move down the line. Organization is one problem; I never understood how the ministry-corps commander-division commander-province chief-district chief system was supposed to work, and apparently it often just doesn't. It would seem useful to try to separate military and civil responsibilities, and perhaps to relieve the corps and division commanders of all purely civil responsibilities.

Security forces in the hamlets are still not strong enough, or aggressive enough. It is almost impossible for an American, living in our comfortable (if sometimes riot-torn) society, to understand what the problem of security is in Vietnam. You just can't go down that country road, although it looks peaceful. You can't spend the night in this area. You take off from a rice paddy with your .50-cal. gunners aiming at an impassive crowd of peasants standing on a dike. This PF outpost was overrun last week. (And that police check-point was annihi-

lated in February; the VC went into the neighboring hamlet, and asked the people to identify the off-duty police living there. The people hated the police so much, because they had illegally charged them 100 piastres for every bag of rice they moved through the check-point, that they pointed them out at once, and the VC, playing heroes, executed them.)

Some RF and PF units are beginning to move out on patrol at night, where there is fire-power to back them up.

E. Specific politics

I have heard that Gene Locke and General Westmoreland are backing Ky. A number of American civilians, in OCO and the embassy, are convinced that the best president for Vietnam would be a civilian and a southerner. They are for Mr. Huong, a former prime minister and mayor of Saigon. He is in his sixties.

Ky told me Huong had said to him, "I can't win, and I hope you do. I am too old to get much done." Thieu said, "I am a candidate, but I hope Huong wins. We should have a civilian president." Thieu is not optimistic about his own candidacy.

Ky said "There will be a coup if a civilian wins and tries to negotiate with the VC or the North, or tries to form a coalition." Thieu said "If I were Chief of Staff or Defense Minister, I would take no part in a coup; I would be loyal to a civilian." (Looking at American military power around Saigon, it seemed clear to me that we could, if we chose, pretty well contain a coup involving ARVN military units.)

Ky said, "The problem I will face is keeping the vote from going too high." Apparently he meant that his friend Loan's enthusiasm—coupled with his power as police and security chief—might get the better of him and produce a 90 percent "mandate." Thieu said, "There must not be any police interference with the election."

I stressed the vital importance of fair elections with both men, saying that a corrupted outcome could undermine American support for the war and set the RVN back years in its efforts to gain public support. As expected, both agreed.

It seems to me that if Thieu remains in, and has not already made a deal with Huong, Ky will win in a simple plurality vote. But if Thieu throws his support to Huong, that would mean a new ball game. I believe we should play it loose for awhile. This is what Ellsworth Bunker appears to be doing.

F. The Viet Cong

Though they are in trouble in most areas, they can still operate in many villages throughout the country, using "terror and blandishment," as Robert Shaplen calls it. (His book, "The Lost Revolution," is

the best work on Vietnam I have read, and I recommend it highly. It covers the 1945–1965 period.)⁴

Recruitment is more difficult; the VC are having to assure potential recruits that they will keep them in their home areas. More often than not they move them soon thereafter into regional or main force units, and this has created some of the dissatisfaction that has led many to become hoi chans.⁵

Despite their losses, they command militant support among a number of villagers. I was told of an old woman, who, seeing her husband arrested as a VC and having already lost two sons with VC units, threw grenades after the RVN police as they left her hamlet.

The VC take every advantage of the hatred generated by RVN corruption, and by the absence of government services. At the same time, they have little to offer in a positive way; their basic appeal is to those who want to get rid of today's system and today's "colonialists"—Americans.

It sounds romantic to say so, but if I were a young peasant living in a hamlet, and had had none of my family hurt or killed by the VC; if I saw that the ridiculous Vietnamese educational system would almost certainly deny me the chance to go beyond the fifth grade; if I was frustrated by the lack of opportunity, and bored by the limited life of the hamlet; if I had no sense of commitment to today's South Vietnamese nation, because the Saigon government had given me no reason to have it; and if I were offered the possibility of adventure, of striking at my Frenchified oppressors and their American allies, and of rising to a position of leadership in the VC, I would join up.

This is only to say that some well-spring of idealism and romanticism is being reached by the Viet Cong, and that it will continue being reached until the government finds a way to tap it for itself. The RD teams, and the spirit of men like Major Be, are the most likely means of doing that; but as I have said, their spirit can be destroyed, just as other efforts have been destroyed in the past, by listless, negligent, or corrupt government officials.

I visited one Chieu-Hoi center. Accommodations were pretty crowded and facilities were few. There are stories of hoi chans being beaten, and frequent accounts of their being denied ID cards and work permits. Whatever the truth of these tales, they do illustrate the understandably divided emotions with which hoi chans are regarded by government forces.

⁴ Robert Shaplen, *The Lost Revolution: The U.S. in Vietnam, 1946–1966* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).

⁵ A reference to hoi chanh, or ralliers defecting from the Viet Cong by way of the government-sponsored Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) amnesty program.

The VC do not give up to U.S. forces in great numbers, although we scare a great many of them into turning themselves in to ARVN units. The language problem, and their fear of our terrific might, make it difficult for them to come to us. I don't know how effective our psy war operation is. MACV's people are infatuated with how many million leaflets they've dropped; someone suggested they would be more effective if they dropped them in their canisters. There is, I take it, much room for improvement in this part of our effort.

It is impossible to tell how many recruits the VC are now getting. The young civilian in the Delta said "Recently most young men around here have managed to dodge both the VC and the ARVN draft." MACV's figures are highly suspicious. Last year's figure was an extrapolation from captured records in 6 provinces out of 44. (The same can almost be said of ARVN and MACV's body counts, in my opinion; nobody seemed to know how many innocent bystanders, impressed baggage carriers and others had been included in the VC "body count." Some improvements in technique are being made in intelligence estimates, however, based on captured morning reports and order of battle documents. The whole business of VC strength, North Vietnamese infiltrators, etc. is a matter of intense controversy between our Army and the Air Force. It is in the latter's interest to show that strikes in the North and in Laos have sharply reduced the enemy's strength; and the Army just as stoutly holds to its figures that show a substantial rise in that strength even after two years of bombing.)

G. Other Free World Forces⁶

I visited Philcag, and was stunned by the soldierly bearing of the Filipino soldiers.⁷ They have an effective civic action effort, a med cap program, and they are building a large and decent refugee camp. Their commander, General Tobias,⁸ is a spit-and-polish tiger. I asked him if many of his men had fought the Huks.⁹ He said, "Yes, but compared to the VC, the Huks were amateurs." He was not sanguine about chances of increasing Philcag's numbers in the near future.

⁶ Thai, Filipino, Australian, New Zealander, and South Korean troop units, plus a host of noncombatants from various other nations, served alongside American soldiers and ARVN in Vietnam. For the "More Flags" effort by the Johnson administration, see Stanley R. Larsen and James L. Collins, Jr., *Allied Participation in Vietnam* (Washington: Department of the Army, 1975).

⁷ The Philippine Civic Action Group, 2,000-strong, was dispatched to the Republic of Vietnam during 1966 as part of the Free World Military Assistance program. Its primary base camp was in Tay Ninh Province. Medical teams operated in three other provinces. Documentation on the Filipino contribution to the war effort is in *Foreign Relations*, 1964–1968, volume XXVI.

⁸ Brigadier General Gaudencio V. Tobias.

⁹ The Hukbalahap were Communist-inspired insurgents in the Philippines.

I visited both the ROK marines and the ROK Tiger division.¹⁰ God, they are a tough bunch. They have a method of seal-and-search that is the epitome of war psychology; it is slow, harrowing, and effective. Some of our civilians feel they have created as many problems as they've solved, that they are too brutal and careless of civilian life. I can't judge the merits of this. I only know I hope I never meet one in a rice paddy some night without the right set of credentials.

I paid a brief visit to an Australian unit. The CO, a colonel of supply, said he thought the Australians were too cautious; they did not patrol widely, or invite attacks; he thought their effectiveness was being diminished by their conservatism. He suggested that this had political causes, as the home government didn't want to see a big casualty list.

H. Tactics

Our firepower is unbelievable. But so, too, are the bunker fortifications of the VC. I prowled around one in a forest north of the 1st Division area, and it was like an underground garage. In the Ho Bo and Boi Loi woods, in the 25th Division area,¹¹ we used B-52s to blow enormous craters all over the place, but our soldiers still had a terrific time cleaning out the VC who remained. We still have few answers to booby-traps and mines. The VC are ingenious in setting them, and they take a fearful toll of civilian lives.

The "war zone"¹² question is a tough one. Some commanders think it is no question at all; you simply move everybody out and then you sweep the place as if it were the Benning battery range. Others believe, as I do, that you create tough political problems when you move people against their will, and that in the absence of special circumstances, it is better to go through the difficult business of trying to root out the VC from among the innocent farmers. I heard Senator Russell¹³ say something to this effect the other night—that you always create problems when you move people away from their homes, particularly in Asia, where ancestor worship is the rule.

[Here follows McPherson's continued discussion of military tactics, the outlook of Air Force personnel, images of servicemen in the

¹⁰ The official name of the Tiger division, stationed in Binh Dinh Province, was the Capital Division.

¹¹ The U.S. Army's 25th Division was headquartered at Cu Chi. It operated principally in Hau Nghia and Long An Provinces. For information on the war in this area, see Eric Bergerud, *The Dynamics of Defeat: The Vietnam War in Hau Nghia Province* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1991); Thomas C. Thayer, *War Without Fronts: The American Experience in Vietnam* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1985); and Jeffrey Race, *War Comes to Long An* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

¹² Fortified Viet Cong base complexes, often near population centers.

¹³ Senator Richard Russell (D-GA).

field, and general comments on personnel, including a description of Robert Komer as “the hope” of many officers and civilians in Vietnam.]

L. Conclusions

I come back neither optimistic nor pessimistic, neither more hawk nor more dove. We are simply there, and we should be.

I had to laugh each time I thought of Fulbright’s phrase “the arrogance of power.”¹⁴ I’m sure it applied, and may still apply, to some Americans in Vietnam, who thought we could bring this conflict to an end by the sheer force of military power and the sheer weight of our assistance programs. But when I think of the American major sitting in his fly-specked office in Gia Dinh province, wondering how to get his Vietnamese advisee to do something intelligent for a change, “arrogance of power” makes me laugh. Our people in Vietnam know, so much more intimately and painfully than Senator Fulbright knows, what the limitations of power are.

I wish there were some new way to convey the reality of Vietnam: some vivid way to say how inter-twined all the strands are, political, military, social, economic, educational, racial, nationalistic. Any one of them can snarl up, or support, any one of the others.

If our effort is only military, we will lose the big prize. We can have, and indeed have now, a kind of enclave-plus-strike force capability. We can line the roads between the enclaves with soldiers, and in that way “secure” them.

But security in Vietnam, freedom from that feeling that you are in somebody’s sights, will ultimately have to be won by something more than military means alone. Leadership at the top, and the political and economic stimulation of the masses of poor who live in the rural areas, are just as important to security as live ammunition. That is a platitude back here in Washington. It is as much a reality in Vietnam as the beauty of the women.

One thing you must always insist on is honest reporting by your own people. You must put a premium on candor, and a pox on what is only meant to make you, and other leaders at home, feel confident. General Harkins¹⁵ destroyed himself by his unfounded and misleading optimism. There is a natural tendency in the military to feel that things are going pretty well, and will go much better if we only have a few more bodies and bombs. I am not competent to pass on the more-troops question, but I think every eye that passes on it should be some-

¹⁴ In the spring, Senator J. William Fulbright (D-AK) published a critical account of U.S. foreign policy, *The Arrogance of Power* (New York: Random House, 1967).

¹⁵ Westmoreland replaced General Paul D. Harkins as Commander, MACV, on June 20, 1964.

what wary of the hungry optimism that is a part of the military personality.

Every aspect of our national life and our role in the world is involved in Vietnam. I feel that I am only another of those many men who have a part of their souls at stake there.

Harry

198. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, June 14, 1967, 1230Z.

28090. Ref: State 210835² and 210584.³

1. I had a meeting of approximately one hour with Prime Minister Ky the afternoon of June 14 and I expect to see General Thieu later this evening.

2. I told the Prime Minister I had three main questions that I wished to raise with him. I said that we had seen increasing signs of arbitrary censorship in the press and other restrictions which might limit the capabilities of candidates to express their views on an equitable basis during the election campaign. I recognized that there were genuine national security reasons for censorship in wartime, but in recent weeks the censorship had been far broader than this and appeared to be directed against the statements of candidates and other matters connected with the elections. I noted in particular that the chief of state's own remarks on these subjects had even been censored out of the local press. I told Ky I thought it was vital that on this question, as on other matters related to the elections, an impression not be created that arbitrary and repressive measures were being used. I added that the foreign press was already becoming aware of this situation and that we had even had indications of concern from Congressmen and other circles in the U.S. I

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Immediate; Exdis. Received at 10:33 a.m. and passed to the White House. Repeated to CINCPAC for POLAD.

² In telegram 210835 to Saigon, June 13, the Department informed Bunker of a conversation among Bundy, Habib, and Diem. Bunker was urged to arrange a substantive meeting between Thieu and Ky in order to resolve the problem of two military candidates. (Ibid.)

³ Document 196.

said I was sure that he would appreciate what a difficult situation would arise if these measures reached such proportions as to bring into question his government's intentions regarding fair elections.

3. Ky acknowledged that there had been some overly enthusiastic steps taken by the censors but said that we had to understand that in this country the press, whether overt or clandestine, would engage in unlimited character assassination if they were not restrained and this would inevitably have an unstabilizing effect on the political situation. He said that it was not like the U.S. and we had to understand this. He then went on to say, however, that he realized censorship of matters relating to candidates and the elections campaign had to be fairly administered. He said that he already had someone from General Thieu's press staff in the censorship office and it was his intention to have each of the candidates assign a representative to this office to make decisions regarding censorship. I also raised with Ky the reports we had had that requests for establishment of new newspapers by candidates were being refused. Ky said that he did indeed not intend to allow any more newspapers to be established, that this had been government policy for the last two years, noting that there were 27 already in Saigon and that there were plenty of opportunities for the candidates to use existing newspapers.

4. I then told Ky that I had also been greatly disturbed by other reports indicating that measures were being taken by his supporters to use questionable tactics and pressure to assure his election. He reiterated that the U.S., with all its investment here in men and money, could not tolerate the use of measures which would make a fair vote impossible. I cited specifically recent reports we had had that General Loan and his men were bringing pressure through police and military security circles to assure that the necessary vote was obtained for Ky's ticket or to remove officials who did not cooperate. Ky did not deny specifically that General Loan had been engaged in such pressure but said he had cautioned Loan as a friend and loyal supporter.

5. I said that the third subject I wished to raise was a matter we had discussed before, namely, our deep concern for the unity of the armed forces and the stability of the country. I recalled his earlier statement to me and to Ambassador Bui Diem that he would discuss privately with General Thieu the matter of two military candidates and try to work out a satisfactory arrangement that would not risk splitting the armed forces. I observed that no such talk had apparently been held and that the problem seemed no nearer solution. I said both he and General Thieu had given assurances to the President at Guam that there would be no split in the military and both had renewed these assurances to me repeatedly since that time. It now appeared likely, however, that there would be in fact two military candidates and that de-

spite General Vien's statement that the armed forces would not take part in politics, the reality was that this situation would inevitably have a deep effect on military unity. I pointed out that inevitably there would be supporters for both him and Thieu within the ranks of the armed forces and that this could only have a divisive effect which would impede the vital war role that the Vietnamese armed forces must play. I underlined the extremely serious effect political squabbles among the military here would have on U.S. public opinion and support at a time when our losses were heavy and the outcome of the war was unsettled. I asked Ky what he planned to do about trying to resolve this problem with Thieu before it was too late.

6. Ky said that the matter was giving him some concern also. At his meeting with the four corps commanders and certain of the military members of the Directorate at Qui Nhon on June 12, the corps commanders reported that there was beginning to be political talk among the junior officers. He instructed them to tell the officers to keep clear of politics and get back to fighting the war and impressed upon them the necessity for not allowing the political campaign to split the army. I said that this was praiseworthy but did not resolve the problem. Ky then remarked that he had in fact been trying to arrange a private talk with Thieu, but the latter had not responded. He said he would try once again to arrange this as soon as possible and would sincerely try to work out a solution that was acceptable and that would avoid a serious split in the armed forces. I said I hoped he would succeed in this important effort and commented that there was surely a role for both of them in the future government of Viet-Nam. They had worked together closely and effectively for two years and should be able to continue to work for the good of the country.

7. In discussing this entire question of the elections and the government which would emerge from it, I told Ky of my strong conviction that the end result must be a strengthening of the country through a broadly-based government comprising unity of the military and cooperation between the civilian and military elements. I said I had been encouraged by the reports of the understanding reached between Ky and Huong regarding use of each other's services, whichever one might win the election. I thought that was a vital principle which should be encouraged for all the candidates. I would also like to see a statement by all candidates that they would accept the verdict of the electorate and would support whatever government emerged as a result of fair and free elections. Ky confirmed that he had reached such an understanding with Huong and concluded with the statement that he understood that what was needed as the final result of the constitutional process was not a strong man but a strong regime.

199. Memorandum From the Deputy for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development (Komer) to the Commander, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (Westmoreland)¹

Saigon, June 14, 1967.

I've been pressing *a new concept for attack on infrastructure* in hopes of selling it before our visitors arrive. It is based on a long background of my own study and analysis back in Washington. CORDS, J-2, and OSA have reviewed it and buy the concept, though many personnel and other details will have to be worked out.

The concept is frankly experimental, but it costs us little to experiment. We have no place to go but up. It is essentially a management structure extending right down to district level. Added personnel needs will be minimal at the outset, and probably available in theater.

The new organization gives OSA a key managerial role, but with full J-2 participation at all levels. I think this sound, because anti-infrastructure intelligence and operations are primarily a police-type matter, and OSA has extensive expertise. Also, I envisage PRU and NPFF as chief exploitation arms. Thus, on the principle of choosing the best "project manager," I chose OSA. But at each level the operation will come under the relevant commander.

There is some concern lest we be setting up two intelligence chains, one for tactical intelligence and another for anti-infrastructure. However, I strongly favor this from a management viewpoint, because the necessary and vital concentration of military intelligence assets (ARVN and US) on tactical needs has partly been at the expense of anti-infrastructure. Moreover, the duplication is so minimal as to be inconsequential.

I intend to personally monitor and if necessary manage this experiment. But I don't want to start till I'm sure I'm on all fours with you.

R. W. Komer²

¹ Source: Central Intelligence Agency, Colby Files, Job 80-M01009A, Vietnam Phoenix/Pacification. Secret; Eyes Only.

² Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

Attachment

Memorandum From the Deputy for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development (Komer) to the Commander, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (Westmoreland)

Saigon, June 14, 1967.

SUBJECT

Organization for Attack on VC Infrastructure

1. *Purpose:* To outline an improved organization for attack on VC infrastructure.

2. *Discussion:*

a. AB-142, the Combined Campaign Plan, highlights destruction of the VC infrastructure as a necessary component of revolutionary development.

b. MRD and supporting US documents describing concepts for revolutionary development also focus on destruction of the VC infrastructure as a basic task.

c. RD teams are instructed to “root out the VC infrastructure”.

d. You have recently emphasized, on several occasions, the need for a better approach to this key problem area.

e. Nevertheless, an integrated, organized attack on the VC infrastructure has not been mounted countrywide.

f. In contrast to the greatly improved tactical intelligence which has materially aided anti-main force operations, results against the infrastructure leave much to be desired. CT 4, organized as part of Operation Fairfax, has pulled together at a high level and for a limited area most of the anti-infrastructure intelligence organizations. But overall results against the infrastructure—considering the length of the operation and size of the troop commitment—have been limited.

g. Attack on the infrastructure is not strictly an *intelligence* problem, but must include exploitation as well. While many units and agencies—US and GVN—are at least partially involved in the attack on infrastructure, there is as yet only piecemeal coordination particularly at the local level. For example, there are only a few District Operational Intelligence Coordination Centers—modeled on the Dien Ban experiment. Nor is there adequate tie-in between intelligence gathering and exploitation.

h. Because rooting out the infrastructure is an essential element of the pacification process, I propose to make it part of Project Takeoff

and to monitor it personally. In my judgment, attack on the infrastructure is—in both its intelligence and exploitation aspects—primarily a police-type measure (see Annex 5 of basic study).³ The GVN agency with the greatest intelligence capability in this field seems to be the NP Special Branch, supported by OSA, and the exploitation assets best suited in the PRV and later a revamped NPFF.

i. Therefore, I had CIA in Washington do a study for me on how to mount a more effective attack on VC infrastructure, especially at the critical district and province levels. I have since personally revised the study with CORDS and OSA help. It is at Tab E.

j. A sustained, effective attack on VC infrastructure requires primarily *better management* of already substantial GVN/US resources, i.e. pulling together the multiplicity of US and GVN agencies already partly in the business. It must be a combined civil/military effort, primarily GVN in character, but with US civil/military assets in an energizing and advisory role. With the Mission reorganization, such joint US action is now more feasible than before.

k. What is chiefly needed is: (1) a joint management structure extending from Saigon down to district—first on a “US-only” basis and then with full GVN participation; (2) a “program manager” at each level to insure coordinated action; (3) use of MACV’s excellent ADP system to provide up-to-date target lists to the provinces and districts and to monitor performance; (4) machinery to assign these targets to appropriate exploitation assets at each field level. The organizational concept proposed to meet these requirements conforms to the new CORDS structure at each level and to the new integrated chain of command (Tab A). It is essentially a unified management structure targeted specifically on infrastructure, but building on existing assets and organizations.

l. While the agencies and personnel concerned must be predominantly Vietnamese, US personnel must play the vital catalytic role. Experience has shown that a small number of US “advisors” in key positions can energize much larger GVN operations. By using existing OSA and MI personnel, added US personnel requirements can be held to a bare minimum of around 164, most of whom are probably available in theater (Tab B).

m. The operational concept at the cutting edge is analogous to a “rifle shot” rather than a “shotgun” approach. Instead of cordon and search operations, it will stress quick reaction operations aimed at individual cadre or at most small groups. Cutting off the heads of the infrastructure at local levels will tend to degrade the whole structure. A

³ Tabs A–E and Annexes 1–5 are attached but not printed.

three-phase plan for putting the above concepts into operation is essential. First concept approval should be obtained. Next the US side should be developed. Then the plan should be presented to the appropriate GVN agencies (Tab C).

o. MACV Staff concurs in importance of revitalized attack on the infrastructure and in the general concept outlined herein, though it requests more detailed study of the modest added personnel required (164 in all—most of whom I believe are already programmed or could be reprogrammed from in-country resources) and of the intermediate level ICEX organization.

3. *Conclusions:*

a. As Deputy for CORDS I approve this concept in substance, but wish to see if you have any objections.

b. Provided you see none, I will convene the proposed Saigon-level ICEX Committee, under my chairmanship, to review and submit firm requirements for personnel, intermediate structure, and time-phased plans for implementation.

c. I further propose to inform Ambassador Bunker by letter of the action taken. I do not believe that we need his formal concurrence, though I am confident he will have no objection.

R. W. Komer⁴

⁴ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

200. **Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹**

Saigon, June 14, 1967, 1335Z.

28095. For the President from Bunker. Herewith my seventh weekly telegram:

A. General

1. General Westmoreland has submitted to me the report which I have requested on programs for reorientation of the mission of the Viet-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Priority; Nodis. Received at 10:58 a.m. This telegram is printed in full in Pike, *The Bunker Papers*, pp. 45–51.

namese armed forces and improvement in their quality and performance.² The report together with his recommendations covering not only activities already underway but also proposals for further actions looking to both the immediate and longer term is comprehensive and thorough. It is worthy of and will require careful study and I hope that we shall have an opportunity to go over it in some detail during Secretary McNamara's visit. Among the important matters treated in detail are:

A) Improving the leadership and enhancing the personnel effectiveness of the ARVN/RF/PF through such things as improvement in the awarding of commissions and promotions, selective procedures, training of officer candidates, the introduction of an effective personnel management and accounting system, tightening up on discipline, improvement in the treatment of veterans in order to clear the rolls of those incapable of further active duty and an expanded advisory effort to support properly the revolutionary development program;

B) To improve motivation and morale through more equitable pay scales, improvement in rations, and revitalization of the dependent housing program;

C) Improvement in the command structure and equipment of the regional popular forces and a revised motivation and indoctrination program to reflect the role of the PF soldier in revolutionary development;

D) A comprehensive training effort to improve intelligence and reconnaissance operations and to improve the combat effectiveness of battalions; training of ARVN/RF/PF for support of revolutionary development particularly in providing security and support to the civil population;

E) Experimentation with various forms of integrated US/RVNAF operations such as the combined action concept (CAC) initiated by the U.S. Marine Corps; a "buddy system" in which a U.S. Army battalion is paired off with an ARVN battalion all the way down to squad level; a system in which an ARVN company is attached to a U.S. Army battalion; and "combined lightning teams" in which a U.S. squad and an ARVN squad will pair with a popular force platoon. The intent of all these operations is to raise the level of training and effectiveness of the ARVN/RF/PF units and to practice the principle of economy of force for the U.S. units. As a result of these experiments it is contemplated that a basic concept for integrated operations will be prepared and put into effect.

F) Institution of quarterly reviews at which time progress is measured against objectives, problems discovered and decisions taken. First of these reviews was held last month.

2. I have mentioned only a very few highlights among literally hundreds of actions underway to improve the performance of ARVN/RF/PF bearing on both the immediate present and the longer term. While there is still a long way to go particularly with the regional

² See footnote 2, Document 192.

and popular forces the payoff of these many improved programs is already being felt in many areas.

A) The number of desertions has dropped to a little over one-third of what it was a year ago.

B) The number of missing in action has dropped to one-half of what it was in early 1966.

C) The trend of weapons lost has been reversed. In early 1966 ARVN/RF/PF lost more than twice the number captured. The ratio is now the exact opposite.

D) In large unit operations ARVN is making more enemy contacts although fewer total operations are run.

E) In small unit operations the ARVN/RF/PF rate of enemy contacts has risen by thirty percent. These are encouraging signs although much remains to be done.

3. The Thieu–Ky situation is still unresolved in spite of the efforts of Ambassador Bui Diem and Foreign Minister Tran Van Do. Despite Ky's assertion both to Ambassador Bui Diem and to me that he would talk with Thieu and endeavor to reach an understanding, he has made only half-hearted attempts to do so and the two have had no meaningful talks. I have appointments today to see both Thieu and Ky. I shall stress to both of them our continuing concern at the prospects of candidacies which could divide the military and threaten national unity as a whole. Although both have asserted in their talks with me that their two candidacies will not divide the military and that General Vien, the Minister of Defense and Chief of Staff, is determined to keep the armed forces aloof from politics and the Presidential campaign I do not accept these statements at face value. I shall press Ky to talk with Thieu promptly to see if a basis still exists for cooperation between them. I intend to indicate again to both, as I have previously, that U.S. national interests can not permit the vital constitutional development in Viet-Nam to be threatened by personal ambitions or rivalry, or by measures to undermine the electoral process. In connection with the electoral process there have been some disturbing developments in regard to the exercise of censorship and arbitrary press control. Equally disturbing are reports on some of General Loan's activities which would require national police and national security chiefs in the provinces to support Ky actively in such a way as to assure his election. I intend to impress on Ky again the absolute importance, in his own interest as well as ours, of seeing to it that the elections are fair and free.

[Here follows discussion of Bui Diem's efforts to mediate the Thieu–Ky rivalry, Ky's campaign tactics, election laws, hamlet chief elections, VC repatriation, economic matters, Chieu Hoi, casualties, and the upcoming visit of Secretary of Defense McNamara and Under Secretary of State Katzenbach.]

201. Telegram From the Embassy in Norway to the Department of State¹

Oslo, June 14, 1967, 1630Z.

4531. For the Secretary. Subject: Norwegian conversation with North Vietnamese.

1. FonMin Lyng called me in June 14 to report conversation which took place June 1 between Ambassador Ole Algard, Norwegian Ambassador Peking, and North Vietnamese Ambassador to Peking Ngo.² Lyng gave me Norwegian text report of meeting which he asked that I transmit to Secretary and his immediate advisors, stressing his desire subject be held closely with no publicity of any kind concerning this conversation. Lyng said GON not in position to evaluate conversation's significance if any, but Secretary had once asked him to pass on any interesting conversations Norwegians might have in Peking. If US Govt wished Ambassador Algard to pursue this or any related subjects with North Vietnamese in Peking, GON stood at our disposal. Algard said North Vietnamese Ambassador intended broach matter along similar lines to his Danish and Swedish colleagues in Peking. Ngo had prefaced conversation by saying it was his impression Nordic countries, although very good friends of US, did not entirely share US view of Vietnam situation.

2. Following is my informal rendition Algard's report, transposed from first to third person:

3. "Ambassador Ngo underlined strongly North Vietnamese Govt disposed toward negotiations. At same time they were deeply mistrustful of Americans' intentions in Vietnam. Steady escalation and sending of new troops indicated Americans had intention of staying permanently in Vietnam.

4. "Ngo underlined North Vietnamese Govt imposed only one condition for negotiations, namely that bombing of North Vietnam be stopped. Clearly having in mind the Chinese, he went to lengths to underline that speeches from other quarters which imposed other conditions including full American withdrawal from South Vietnam did not reflect North Vietnam Govt's thought. On North Vietnamese side one gave decisive weight to stop in bombing because this was viewed as respect for North Vietnamese sovereignty and such a respect was an absolute condition for coming to conference table, but was also the only

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL NOR VIET N. Secret; Priority; Exdis.

² Reference is to DRV Ambassador to the PRC Ngo Minh Loan, usually referred to in the cable series as Loan.

condition. When they had come to conference table, North Vietnam position would be very flexible. 'We are,' said Ambassador Ngo, 'ready for very far reaching compromises to get an end to the war.' Ambassador Algard noted that recently one had impression that North Vietnamese side was cooler toward negotiations. Ambassador Ngo denied this strongly. He said that formerly when North Vietnam showed an interest in negotiations Americans had taken such interest as a sign of weakness and with results of stronger escalation. This was background against which one must judge some recent speeches on North Vietnamese side. Provided there would be a stop in bombing, North Vietnam was ready at any time for negotiations and far reaching compromises.

5. "In this connection there was discussion of U Thant's role. Amb Algard said Norway strongly supported U Thant's efforts to get negotiations underway and Norway had absolute confidence in U Thant in this connection. Therefore Norwegians had been disturbed by statements of Chinese which appeared to have intention to undermine U Thant and to look with distrust upon his capacities as mediator. Amb Ngo made it very clear that North Vietnamese did not share Chinese estimate of U Thant. To be sure U Thant's last proposition was unacceptable to North Vietnam, but North Vietnam valued U Thant's peace efforts and judged him Asiatic statesman with full understanding of what the war in Vietnam involved.

6. "Amb Ngo said he hoped developments would not take such form that North Vietnam must ask for foreign, and in first instance Chinese, help. That was one thing that they would do their utmost to avoid. To question under what conditions would North Vietnamese Govt feel forced to ask for help, he said that beforehand one could not determine fixed criteria. He said however that an American invasion of North Vietnam in itself would not necessitate foreign help. North Vietnam had an army of 400 thousand men which would be capable of mastering such a situation. Amb Algard had impression that only danger of direct occupation of all North Vietnam would force North Vietnamese Govt to ask foreign help. It was plain Amb Ngo considered it very important to clarify North Vietnamese position on question of foreign help.

7. "At end of conversation Amb Algard brought up question of American prisoners in North Vietnam and said it had caused concern, including concern in Norway, that North Vietnamese had so strongly underlined these men were not war prisoners but war criminals. Amb Ngo underlined that this was point of principle. Fact North Vietnam is formally not at war with US and following international conventions on handling of war prisoners does not therefore apply. If on North Vietnamese side they said they would handle war prisoners in accordance

with such conventions they would thereby legalize American participation in war. He said American prisoners were treated on 'man to man' basis, but he would not be more precise. Algard said even if North Vietnamese Govt on grounds of principle would not apply relevant international conventions, he believed it would be of great importance for North Vietnamese prestige if people were convinced the prisoners were well treated. Even if they would not permit inspection by the Red Cross, it should be possible to find other means of inspecting prison camps, for example, through UN or other international organizations, in such a manner that did not prejudice North Vietnam's point of principle in this matter. Amb Ngo said he understood this was a question which preoccupied a great many men and which could be damaging to North Vietnam and he would not exclude that the North Vietnamese side would take a new look at this question."³

Tibbetts

³ This potential negotiation channel was code-named Ohio. In telegram 213389 to Oslo, June 20, the Department noted that Loan took the initiative for the discussion and that his message was being conveyed through "Nordic representatives," which made it appear even more earnest. The most interesting aspects of the contact, the Department believed, were Loan's statements that the DRV was prepared for compromise and would be flexible. The Department requested that Algard continue the conversations with Loan. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL NOR VIET N) On June 23 Tibbetts passed this request to Lyng, who declined to report to Loan that his government had informed Washington of the June 1 meeting so as to "not muddy waters." Lyng would allow messages to be exchanged by pouch and not by coded cable as the U.S. Government wished. Despite Lyng's "cold feet," Tibbetts believed that Algard would be given enough leeway to act as a useful intermediary. (Telegram 4679 from Oslo, June 23; *ibid.*) The Department maintained "complete confidence" in the ability of Lyng and Algard to conduct the exchange in an appropriate manner. (Telegram 215936 to Oslo, June 24; *ibid.*) However, on June 29 Algard reported that Loan, like various other DRV representatives abroad, had been recalled to Hanoi for consultations. (Telegram 4755 from Oslo, June 20, and telegram 219355 to Oslo, June 29; both *ibid.*)

202. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, June 15, 1967, 1230Z.

28170. 1. In one hour talk with Thieu last night after his return from I Corps I took up with him the matter of the unity of the armed forces and its relationship to the Presidential elections as I had with Ky earlier.² I recalled to him the President's very deep concern that the electoral process should not lead to a division within the military and the repeated assurances both he and PM Ky had given me in the past that this will not be permitted to happen. I said that in recent days we have had reports from the press and from people that have talked with him that he was planning shortly to announce his candidacy for the Presidency. Since PM Ky had long ago announced his candidacy it seemed to me that we will be faced with a situation to bring about a split in the armed forces. I realized that General Vien had announced that the military would not support any political candidates for President and I welcomed this statement of intention. I feared, however, that the reality was that the presentation of two candidates from the armed forces both of whom had close friends within the forces would inevitably result in a division of loyalty and support among the military.

2. I said that I hoped and had been led to believe that he and the Prime Minister would discuss this difficult question personally and privately in order to find an acceptable solution but I understood that they had not done so. Therefore I had to say to him very frankly that I thought it was urgent and essential for him and the Prime Minister to discuss this matter directly with a view to finding a solution that would assure that the armed forces and the country would not be divided. I informed Thieu that as I had been unable to see him earlier I had already talked to Prime Minister Ky and impressed upon him the vital necessity of discussing this matter frankly together and arriving at a solution.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Immediate; Exdis. Received at 9:39 a.m. and repeated to CINCPAC for POLAD and passed to the White House, where it was retyped for the President. Rostow sent it to the President under a covering note which read: "Herewith Bunker leans on Thieu. No clear answer yet—and pretty sticky." The notation "L" on the covering note indicates that the President saw the telegram. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Memos to the President, Walt Rostow, 6/1–8/2/67, Vol. I)

² See Document 198.

3. It was not our desire to take sides on the question of who should become President but rather to make sure that the constitutional electoral process strengthened the country and brought about true national unity rather than further dividing the nation. I felt sure that as a true patriot we could count upon him to recognize the importance of achieving these objectives and to do his best to bring them about.

4. Thieu replied at length and for him with considerable emotion. He said that he not only recognized the necessity for unity of the armed forces but could assure me that the military would remain united whether there were two or three or four candidates from the armed forces. They wanted to stay clear of politics and get on with the war. It was not the armed forces but what some people were doing which was tending to create disunity in the country and to make people doubt that the elections would be fair and honest. He then referred directly to some of Ky's activities, the latter's attempted use of some members of the armed forces such as General Tri and General Thang in support of his candidacy, the flagrant abuse of censorship, and General Loan's activities. "How can you expect the public to believe that elections will be fair and honest when the remarks of the Chief of State are censored? What do you think the public reaction is when people see signs reading Prime Minister Ky's government is the government of the poor. It is not Ky's government, the Directorate is the government and I happen to be its chairman."

5. Thieu went on to describe Loan's activities in bringing pressure to bear on the provincial heads of the national police and on province chiefs to support Ky. He said that General Thang and the RD organization will be the next to feel the pressure. He added that all these activities of Ky and his associates were widely known to the press and the public generally and he said "You do not have to take my word for it. You have ample means of intelligence and you can find out for yourselves."

6. Thieu then went on at some length to stress his view of the imperative need for fair and honest elections if the people were to have any confidence in the government. Otherwise he said there would be a return to the days of Diem and eventually there would be another coup.

7. I recalled to him the recent statements appearing in the press that he would become a candidate and said that in our last conversation he had indicated that he had not yet definitely made up his mind. I asked him if he had yet done so and he replied that he had intended to become a candidate and would have a civilian running mate. He repeated his previous statement to me that he had little money at his disposal, would not ask for the support of any members of the armed forces and had as yet no organization and therefore his chances of be-

ing elected were not good. Nevertheless, it was a matter of conscience with him to become a candidate and to do what he could to assure honest elections. As things stood now he could not guarantee honest elections yet as chief of state he would be held responsible. If he was not able to bring about a change he would prefer to resign rather than be blamed for something he was unable to control.

8. I said that we shared his conviction that elections should be fair, free and honest but we also felt that it was essential that unity of the armed forces should be maintained and the war prosecuted with the utmost vigor. I therefore felt it was urgent that he and PM Ky should get together without delay and try to come to some understanding. Granting that both were well intentioned and sincerely believed that unity of the military could be maintained if there were more than one military candidate, I could not accept this to be a realistic view of the situation. It could not be expected that the US could continue the huge contribution it was making in men, money and resources unless the Vietnamese themselves avoided internal dissension and exerted their utmost efforts also. Thieu replied "Yes, that is true, your contribution is tremendous and people believe that your interest in the situation here is so great that if the elections are not honest you will share part of the blame."

9. *Comment:* Thieu was non-committal about his willingness to talk with Ky. It is apparent that his resentment at Ky's aggressiveness and activities runs very deep. While it is difficult to know what is really in the back of his mind his statement that he would be a candidate is the most categorical he has yet made to me. Whether this will be his final decision is difficult to say, this may depend on what other factors are brought into play. Nevertheless for the present we must assume that he will be a candidate and plan our next steps accordingly. These we are considering and will have further comments and recommendations.

Bunker

203. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, June 15, 1967, 10:45 a.m.

Mr. President:

Here are my views on bombing policy.

1. Bob McNamara believes that we may have to live with the war through 1968 and beyond. He holds that we can best do this if we adopt a relatively low-key strategy. This means two things:

- We should not go for a big troop increase but work patiently and gradually to improve the performance of the Vietnamese; and
- Limit our bombing to the region south of the 20th parallel.

He believes this is the setting in which the U.S. public will best accommodate itself to seeing the war through; and he holds that in this setting the forces of moderation in Hanoi are most likely to move towards a gradual decline in the level of hostilities and, perhaps, negotiations.

2. Pending the results of the investigation of manpower requirements by Bob, Bus and Nick, I am inclined to think that we need:

- more troops to work with the Vietnamese in getting at the provincial main force units and thus lay the base for pacification;
- a decision for some limited call-ups would impress Moscow and Hanoi more than anything else that we have the capacity to see the war through, which is the critical issue of judgment in Hanoi; and
- that if we do this, we need a strong bombing policy in the northern part of Viet Nam, but short of direct attack on shipping. (Current evidence is that the port is bottlenecking for one reason or another and, therefore, it is internal transport and concentrations of supply rather than ships which are the appropriate attritional targets.)

3. Therefore, I would propose:

- that you give the Russians an interval of several weeks, perhaps via the Kosygin trip, to get Hanoi into serious negotiations, while holding bombing in the north well away from Hanoi and Haiphong;
- and then make your decision on manpower and bombing policy together, as a package, after Bob returns.²

Walt

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Walt Rostow, Bombing. Top Secret. The notation "L" on the memorandum indicates that the President saw it. McNamara met with the President, along with other members of the NSC, from 1:10 to 2:35 p.m. on June 13, and did so again from 11:55 a.m. to 1:06 p.m. on June 15. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary) No notes of these meetings have been found.

² McNamara and Katzenbach traveled to Vietnam July 7–11.

204. Memorandum From the Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs, Central Intelligence Agency (Carver) to Director of Central Intelligence Helms¹

Washington, June 16, 1967.

SUBJECT

15 June Meeting at State on Canadian Proposal

1. On Thursday, 15 June, Mr. William Bundy convened Mr. Cooper, Mr. Greene² (of INR, representing Mr. Hughes), Mr. Habib and myself to discuss the Department's response to a Canadian proposal.

2. In essence, Foreign Secretary Paul Martin had broached to Secretary Rusk the idea of our suspending our bombing in return for an ICC policing of the DMZ.³ The object of the meeting was to review this proposition and, specifically, work up the text of a "Dear Paul" letter from Rusk to Martin.

3. There was a wide range of discussion which I tried to bring into focus by insisting that we initially decide whether we wanted to make a pitch for international propaganda purposes (confident that Hanoi would reject) or wanted to make a serious overture that might be picked up. The consensus conclusion was that Hanoi was unlikely to accept any effective policing of the DMZ, but that our proposition should be one we could live with if Hanoi did take it up. Mr. Cooper raised the thought of our working through the Soviets, an idea the rest of us swiftly shot down. Mr. Habib and I stressed the need of advising the South Vietnamese early in the game if we did anything with the Canadian proposal, certainly before either the Indians or the Poles were informed since one of these two (if not both) could be counted on to leak our overture to Saigon.

¹ Source: Central Intelligence Agency, SAVA (Carver) Files, Job 80–R01720R, GAC Chrono, Jan 67–Sep 67. Secret; Sensitive. The previous day, George Carver briefed the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (PFIAB) on the situation in Vietnam. Carver responded to numerous questions about the ability of the U.S. Government to achieve victory in Vietnam. In response to Clifford's noting of rising dissent in governmental circles, Carver rejoined that in his personal opinion more troops were needed but that "if we regain the strategic initiative, and make real progress in pacification, and avoid a political debacle, then the war can be won." Asked about a bombing cessation, Carver stated his opposition to such a measure because the leadership in Hanoi would consider it "as a real political victory for them." In response to a question by Taylor as to whether the bombing should be increased, Carver responded that the bombing program should concentrate in the South but that restrikes and some random bombing could occur in the North "to keep the enemy off balance." (Ibid., Executive Registry Subject Files, Job 80–R01580R, PFIAB 14)

² Fred Greene, Director of Research and Analysis for East Asia and Pacific, INR.

³ See footnote 3, Document 133.

4. We finally decided that the proposal was a non-starter if it involved nothing more than a few ICC observation teams in the DMZ. If, however, the ICC could, or would be willing, to put in a substantial force (a minimum of 3,000 men) which would engage in active patrolling by foot, jeep, boat and helicopter throughout the length of the DMZ, the proposition merited further consideration. We also decided that the first step should be to determine whether the Canadians were willing to talk in terms of—and help raise—a force of this size operating under a sufficiently broad charter.

5. The following specific immediate courses of action were agreed upon:

a) Bundy will draft a letter to Martin along the lines outlined above which we will then review.⁴

b) Bundy will endeavor to persuade the Secretary, and anyone else who needs to be persuaded, that under no circumstances should this Canadian proposal even be mentioned to the Soviets during Kosygin's visit.

6. I will keep you advised of what, if anything, further develops on this activity.

George A. Carver, Jr.⁵

⁴ Not further identified.

⁵ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

205. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, June 16, 1967, 1015Z.

28218. Subject: Thieu-Ky elections. Reference: State 210584² and 210835.³

1. Dept will have seen my reports of separate conversations June 14 with Ky and Thieu (Saigon 28090 and 28170)⁴ and is aware of Thieu's announcement made same day in Hue and Saigon (Saigon 28094).⁵

2. Some additional rigidity of positions and tension have been injected into the military side of the picture by Thieu's public declaration, although the civilian candidates are clearly pleased by this development. I have once again urged both Ky and Thieu to come together promptly and attempt to work out an amicable understanding, but I am not optimistic that this will be done, or that if the meeting comes about, much progress will be made. As I have reported, Ky is determined to run and to win, and as of now he appears prepared to use whatever means are needed for this purpose unless we bring our influence to bear directly and forcefully on him regarding some of the pressure moves he has already initiated to assure his election. I have impressed upon him that some of the methods he has been using can damage his own image to such an extent that it may affect both his chances of election and if elected his ability to govern.

3. Thieu's candidacy has made Ky's task much more difficult by assuring some reduction of army votes and support for him. This was undoubtedly one of Thieu's chief objectives⁶ another perhaps being to

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Priority; Exdis. Received at 8:20 p.m. and passed to the White House where it was retyped for the President. In the covering note transmitting the copy to the President, Rostow wrote: "In my judgment, Bunker should not go forward with his proposal to get Ky to send Loan away (p. 3) until you, Sec. Rusk and Sec. McNamara walk around the proposition most carefully. There's flavor of impending political crisis here." A handwritten note by Jim Jones conveys the President's response as follows: "Walt, serious—doubt this. Express to Sec. Rusk my concern." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Memos to the President, 6/1–8/2/67, Vol. I)

² Document 196.

³ See footnote 2, Document 198.

⁴ Documents 198 and 202.

⁵ In telegram 28094 from Saigon, June 14, the Embassy reported Thieu's announcement of his official candidacy. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S)

⁶ In a June 16 memorandum to Katzenbach, which discussed this telegram, Harri-man observed: "I gain the impression that Thieu has announced his candidacy because he is concerned with Ky's behavior. He probably knows even more about that than has been exposed by recent telegrams from our Embassy in Saigon, which is certainly bad enough. It may be necessary to deal with Ky's behavior before the problem of two military candidates." (Ibid., POL 14 VIET S)

lay the groundwork for combining forces with a civilian ticket, for example, as Prime Minister to Huong if this could be agreed. Running on his own Thieu will weaken Ky's support. In combination with Huong he would in addition improve the latter's prospects. We have heard that supporters of Huong and Thieu have talked but we have no confirmation that they have reached any sort of understanding.

4. We do not see how dual military candidacies or Thieu's ultimate joining with a civilian ticket can fail to have some divisive effect on military especially on regional grounds. Ky will feel greater urgency to demonstrate that he is a winner and to develop a band-wagon atmosphere in order to attract both military and civilian support. He has already been resourceful in doing this and, by moving rapidly and effectively, he has undercut any intention by Thieu to do the same. Thieu probably now sees his candidature as a last chance to sabotage Ky's efforts and also as an opportunity to join a winning combination against Ky. All of these factors make increased military involvement in political maneuvering probable and, if not checked, the result could be to impede the Vietnamese military effort at a critical juncture. While I think it will be difficult to sterilize the military from this political process, as General Cao Van Vien has announced, I believe a genuine further effort in this direction should nevertheless be made. I am now trying to arrange a small luncheon with Thieu, Ky and Vien to bring them together in intimate and informal surroundings to discuss this problem. I would hope as a minimum to secure their agreement to a public statement subscribed to by all three reaffirming Vien's earlier announcement and containing specific instructions to the armed forces to refrain from further involvement. I would also hope to get an agreement that the statement would be circulated to officers and ranks and that specific instructions would be issued to corps and division commanders placing responsibility on them to see that the instructions are carried out. This should help the situation but the problem will remain and will require constant vigilance and prodding to see that some effect is given to the instructions.

5. I do not believe that we can bring about Thieu's withdrawal by direct pressure on him without running the unacceptable risk of failing and of giving Thieu a major weapon to use against us and against Ky, who would then be the "American candidate." Our chief role in the constitutional process should be to assure that it proceeds on a reasonably fair and equitable basis and that the result broadens the popular base of the Vietnamese Government and increases national unity for prosecution of the war and negotiation of the peace. A secondary, but important, objective is to bring into office as qualified and effective a team of leaders as possible for these same purposes. Fundamental to the primary objective, of course, is a fair election, and Ky's current actions are very rapidly destroying this possibility. All political ele-

ments are fully aware of what is going on and have concluded that Ky is getting away with it because the Americans support him and condone his methods. Even if we think Ky is the most efficient and energetic leader on the scene, and this is not entirely certain, his election as a result of clearly repressive measures would in the long run destroy his effectiveness and sow the seeds of disunion and dissidence. The chief ones to benefit in the end from this process would be the Vietcong and Hanoi.

6. To demonstrate that we stand for a fair election ahead of support for any one individual, I am convinced that we must force Ky to take certain measures to counteract the damage that has already been done. One possibility would be prompt exportation of General Loan, perhaps on invitation to an extended training visit and program in the U.S. This would be symbolic and possibly easiest for Ky to accept once he is convinced that we will not tolerate the course he is following and that we are prepared to engage him publicly on this score. A quiet removal of Loan from the scene would be understood by all and might not involve too direct loss of face by Ky himself, especially if he personally instructs Loan to absent himself, as he apparently did on the earlier trip to Washington.

7. Once this move has been taken and if we can get Ky to initiate other quiet measures to control censorship and to assure equal facilities for all candidates, there might then be a basis for seeing how we could encourage the leading candidates to prepare the ground for working together in a government of national union whatever the election outcome may be. (I have reported that Ky claims to be working in this direction with Huong and if elected would plan to take other civilian elements into his government. Thieu seems to be working along the same lines.) This will obviously be a delicate and difficult undertaking, but I would hope that once the election is publicly cleansed, we would be in a position to work quietly with the principal candidates and their supporters to impress upon them the absolute necessity from their viewpoint and our own of bringing about such a coalition so long as the war continues. Essential ingredients in this process would be employment of the talents of the most highly qualified individuals to fill key government posts, a full and responsible role and authority for the armed forces in the government, and an understanding with the new legislative leaders that the war effort must take precedence over less urgent objectives until an acceptable peace has been attained. Only through some such broad understanding and cooperation among the key political elements—military, civilian, regional, religious, and minorities—can we hope to overcome the divisive effects which are now evident and which are already undermining the political process.

8. I would also hope that it might be possible to get all the candidates to state publicly that they would abide by the verdict of the

electorate and would support whatever government emerged as the result of fair and free elections.⁷

Bunker

⁷ In telegram 212155 to Saigon, June 16, the Department concurred with Bunker's general assessment and directed him to press Thieu, Ky, and the other Generals "on getting the military establishment sterilized to the extent possible from the political process." The Department did not agree with Bunker's proposal to force Ky to commit to a fair election and doubted that he would remove Loan. (Ibid.)

206. Memorandum From the Ambassador at Large (Harriman) to President Johnson¹

Washington, June 17, 1967.

SUBJECT

Possible Kosygin Talks on Vietnam Settlement

Background:

Your meeting with Kosygin offers a unique opportunity for progress towards negotiations for a peaceful settlement in Vietnam. Direct or indirect cooperation of the Soviets is, I believe, essential to get talks going.

There is undoubtedly a difference of opinion within the Kremlin on this question, as is always the case on important matters. During the war, I knew that this was true even in Stalin's Politburo, at least until he made the decision.

From my talks with Kosygin two years ago and his actions in London last February, it is clear that Kosygin believes Soviet interests are best served by the ending of hostilities in Vietnam. However, of first importance in Soviet foreign policy is their conflict with Peking, and Moscow will not be anxious to get out in front and give credence to the accusation that they are conniving with the United States. In addition, Kosygin still smarts under what he considers a deliberate personal affront because bombing commenced during his visit to Hanoi.

¹ Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Harriman Papers, Special Files, Public Service, Subject File, Johnson, Lyndon 1967. Top Secret.

Recommended Action:

Under all these circumstances, I believe that to achieve positive results from your discussion with Kosygin it is important that you make some unilateral gesture. I therefore recommend that you inform him that you have decided to de-escalate the bombing, perhaps in accordance with the 20th Parallel proposal, without any commitment as to the length of time this restraint would hold. You might suggest that you are not going to make this decision public, but that he is free to inform Hanoi if he wishes. This gesture on your part would unquestionably improve Kosygin's position with his colleagues, and perhaps make it possible for him to carry on an exploratory discussion with you in an objective manner on what each side might do to encourage a de-escalation of the fighting and a commencement of discussions.

Comment:

Although Kosygin is a devoted Communist, his first concern is solving in a pragmatic way their internal economic problems. I believe you will find him interested in further progress in the control of nuclear weapons and curtailment of military expenditures if Vietnam can be gotten out of the way.

I would not be discouraged if little progress can be made on fundamental agreements on the Middle East. This is an area in which the Soviets have attempted to expand their influence at our expense for the last dozen years with the expenditure of billions of dollars in military and economic aid. Nevertheless, I would not rule out progress on what Dobrynin in his talk with Dean called the Number One subject, namely, Vietnam.²

W. Averell Harriman³

² This meeting between Rusk and Dobrynin took place from 3:05 p.m. to 3:55 p.m. on June 16, with Thompson present. (Johnson Library, Dean Rusk Appointment Book, 1967) A record of their discussion is in a memorandum of conversation, June 16. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S) Dobrynin repeated this remark in a meeting alone with Thompson later in the evening. (Memorandum of conversation, June 16; *ibid.*, POL 7 USSR)

³ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

207. Editorial Note

The impending visit of Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin to New York in order to attend meetings at the United Nations presented the Johnson administration with an opportunity to engage the Soviet leader in talks on a number of important issues, including the war in Vietnam. On June 19, 1967, President Johnson discussed on the telephone with Senator J. William Fulbright the chances for successful talks during Kosygin's impending visit. As to Kosygin's willingness to be forthcoming on Vietnam, Johnson commented: "He has just been to London, Bill, and got the hell clobbered out of him because all you doves said he worked out a deal to sell them out, and it didn't work. Now, he didn't have a deal to sell them out, and they don't put it that bluntly. But that's the way they put it in their circles. When they read—when China reads—that he and Wilson had a deal that could bring this war to an end, they think he was over there acting as a broker. Now he didn't do that at all, and they misinterpreted. But their desire to stop the war and to really blame me got the best of them. The Wilson–Kosygin deal was a pure phony. It had no—it was just about as much as U Thant's deal back there in Burma. It was just as much a phony. They sent a message to North Vietnam asking them if they wouldn't go along here and try to work this thing out. North Vietnam immediately took it up with the Chinese and subsequently sent a delegation there. And they just got reamed out good and said if you keep playing with these damned Russian traitors you're going to find yourself alone. So, a burnt child dreads a fire. He's not going to get back in this unless he can deliver something, and I don't think he's quite ready to deliver it now because I don't think he has that horsepower with North Vietnam. I think we got as good a reading on it as anybody." (Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and Fulbright, June 19, 1967, 10:57 p.m., Tape F67.12, PNO 1 & 2)

208. Memorandum From the Deputy for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (Komer) to the Commander, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (Westmoreland)¹

MACJO1R

Saigon, June 19, 1967.

SUBJECT

How to Get Our Case Across to McNamara

1. *We must convince Washington that there is something more than stalemate in prospect.* The most credible way is to demonstrate that we are already achieving substantial momentum, but that it could still take mighty long to achieve ultimate success unless we increase that momentum. In other words, we're already on the right track but need added resources to increase the pressure. I frankly believe that we *are* succeeding better than we realize. The picture in this country is surely much better than it was a year ago, much less two years ago. This should be brought out more in the McNamara briefings.

2. A major reason why so many believe we face stalemate is that no matter how much we increase the kill ratio or favorable weapons ratio or defector ratio, *enemy strength seems to remain the same.* Thus Vietnam appears to be a never-ending war. I won't contest the 6,500 infiltration rate, given the added NVA units showing up on O/B. But I seriously question the estimate of continued 7,000 VC in-country recruitment. Phil Davidson honestly says that this is only a best guess (and could be off by 15 percent as I recall). Yet if this is becoming increasingly an NVA war, VC strength must be going down. We must get a better fix on it. Perhaps my suggestion that the incident trend in II–IV Corps be separated out from that in I Corps would furnish a basis for showing that we are achieving greater success everywhere but I Corps. Perhaps we should also use a range of 3/5,000 for in-country recruitment if we can justify it.

3. To show my own estimate of the momentum I think we can achieve in pacification, I am adding to my wrap-up briefing for McNamara *the attached prognosis chart.* Since I did not display it at the pre-briefing, I would appreciate your reaction.

4. Perhaps a similar military prognosis by you, either at the beginning or at the end of the regular briefing, would be even more useful. You could cite the increasingly favorable kill ratio, weapons ratio, Chieu

¹ Source: Center for Military History, DepCORDS/MACV Files, Westmoreland Memos—RWK 1967–68. Secret; Eyes Only.

Hoi figures, evidence of declining VC morale and logistic difficulties, opening of LOC's, etc., as basis for a judgment that we are gradually grinding down the VC/NVA. Then you could point out that if several added factors come into play—increased RVNAF size and effectiveness, ground interdiction of Laos LOC, varying increases in Free World Forces, etc.—you believe that we could achieve a clear upper hand in SVN by say mid-1968. Note that I say a “clear upper hand.” You obviously cannot predict that the war would be over by any specific date, but you could estimate that the pressure on Hanoi to fade away or negotiate would become overwhelming once it fully hoisted aboard that the war was inexorably being lost. I believe that the VC in the South already are coming to recognize this, but that Hanoi is hoping for some external factor such as U.S. impatience to save it from defeat by attrition. In any case, a clear-cut prognosis given by you would pull together the present set of disparate briefings and set a constructive tone.

R. W. Komer²

Attachment

1967–68 PROGNOSIS

If we can achieve:

1. Successful creation of functioning, reasonably stable, popularly-based GVN.
2. Continued or increased momentum in anti-main forces campaign and opening of LOC's.
3. Substantial add-on to RVNAF pacification security forces and some increase in RVNAF quality.
4. Doubling of RD Teams before and '68 plus supplementary civil/military teams and locally-trained RD teams.
5. Increased Chieu Hoi rate from 1700 a month in 1966 to 3750 in 1968.
6. Success in new attack on VC infrastructure.
7. Continued thickening of US advisory structure.
8. Better pacification planning and management control.

Then we should see substantial, visible momentum in pacification over next 12–18 months. Since above sub-goals are probably realizable in large measure, I see chances of achieving demonstrable pacification progress during 1967–68 as at least 2–1.

² Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

209. Telegram From the Central Intelligence Agency to the Department of State¹

Washington, June 19, 1967, 1406Z.

CIA 7697. Note to Secretary of State Rusk (eyes only) from Director CIA.

Ambassador Bunker has sent the following message to me for passing to you eyes only. You will note Ambassador Bunker's parenthetical introduction to the text. (Saigon 8185, DTG 191253Z)

(Following is text of message which Ambassador Bunker requests be passed to Secretary of State Rusk. Ambassador has requested that knowledge of this proposal be held to minimum. Outside of Station, proposal is known only to Ambassador Bunker, Deputy Ambassador Locke, and General Westmoreland. Latter two have concurred.)

"1. I have become concerned at the deteriorating political situation here which has resulted from several factors. One of these, of course, is General Thieu's announcement of his candidacy for President, with results which are well known to the Department. Of much greater seriousness, however, are the rather blatant election-rigging tactics of General Loan. A number of sources have brought Loan's tactics to our attention and they are covered thoroughly in a CAS report, [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*].²

"2. Loan's tactics have created a situation in which much of what we have succeeded in doing over the past year in working toward a constitutional government is being vitiated within a very short time. Loan's actions are so widely known that, as long as he remains in his present position, the results of the September election will remain in doubt regardless of how well in the end it may be conducted. Even if Ky takes measures to rein in Loan and to insure that the election is conducted fairly, very few Vietnamese will have faith in the fairness of the result if Loan remains as Police Director General. The implications for our position here, elsewhere abroad, and at home are too obvious to need spelling out.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Intelligence File, Vietnamese (South) Elections 1967. Secret; Eyes Only; Nodis. The telegram was transmitted to Rostow, who then forwarded it to the President. On the June 19 covering memorandum, Rostow wrote: "This is a critically important cable sent by Amb. Bunker via the back channel. It is being held most closely at State. There will be no action on it, of course, without your considering it. Nick may raise it at lunch tomorrow." The handwritten notation "L" on the covering memorandum indicates that the President saw the telegram. Katzenbach, McNamara, Helms, McGeorge Bundy, Rostow, and Christian met with Johnson for the regular Tuesday Luncheon from 1:06 p.m. to 2:20 p.m. on January 20. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary) No record of the meeting has been found.

² A CIA report on Loan's activities apparently based on this cable was sent to Bundy; see footnote 2, Document 211.

"3. In thinking about this problem we must, however, realize that some of the blame is probably shared by Thieu. While such a judgment is of necessity uncertain, it is notable that there was no solid evidence of any intention on the part of Ky and Loan to rig the election until Thieu tossed his hat rather tentatively into the ring on 20 May. From that point on, we began to see a flurry of behind-the-scenes activity. The most offensive was carried on by Loan and was aimed at utilizing the administration and police machinery nationwide to insure a Ky victory.

"4. If Ky were not virtually certain to win, whether by proper or improper means, and if he were not on balance the best available candidate, though not exactly a prize package, the problem could be viewed from a different perspective. However, since we shall almost certainly have to contend with him as the President and dominant political force for some time to come, it is in my judgment urgent that we take steps to restore faith in the fairness of his administration and of the honesty of the forthcoming elections.

"5. I have been carefully examining the means which might be employed to exert pressure on Ky to put his house in order. Although I recognize the weight of points made in Deptel 212155,³ I nevertheless feel that he must be persuaded that Loan, however valuable he may be to Ky as the latter's most trusted lieutenant, has now become a pernicious force whose continued presence in his present office neither Ky nor ourselves can in our own best interests continue to tolerate. I think there are ways of persuading Ky of this unhappy fact while at the same time maintaining our good relations with him personally.

"6. If we are able to arrange for Loan's removal from the scene, this will, of course, probably be a temporary measure and should be managed with suitable attention to saving face. Since it would be difficult for him to be removed from office and remain in the country without continuing his undesirable activities, one obvious solution is to arrange to have him sent to the United States for training, perhaps at one of the military staff colleges. It would be helpful if the Department could look into this possibility.⁴

"7. The advantages which will flow from Loan's removal are, of course, considerable. The most important of them is that the Vietnamese whose opinions count will probably, almost without exception, interpret his departure from the scene as an earnest of the GVN's intention to conduct a fair election. Loan's removal, precisely because it is rather a drastic step, is one of the few measures which would be so interpreted. We are entitled to hope that a major share of the credit for Loan's removal will accrue to Ky, whose image at the moment badly

³ Attached but not printed; see footnote 7, Document 205.

⁴ Johnson wrote the following note next to this paragraph: "Look into."

needs refurbishing. A very large share of the credit is also certain to accrue to our own government, thus minimizing any basis for charges that we are supporting a corrupt regime.

"8. Over and above what we do about Loan, we need to act energetically to prevent any recurrence of this type of problem. Since Thieu's actions have contributed importantly to creating the problem in the first place, there may be measures which we can take to exert behind-the-scenes pressure on Thieu to withdraw from the Presidential race. If so, we shall reduce the dangers to Ky's candidacy, making it easier for him to run an honest campaign. We are actively investigating these measures with help from CAS.

"9. The core of the problem which we face, however, remains the fact that Ky does not have enough experience or political wisdom of his own at this point to conduct his campaign without sounder advice than he can command from his compatriots. It is therefore incumbent upon us to establish a special relationship with Ky in order to exert on him the sort of continuous influence which is impossible through formal official contacts. [*1 1/2 lines of source text not declassified*]

"10. The disadvantages of giving any type of backing to any particular candidate are, of course, numerous and well known, and our public policy of remaining neutral as between the various candidates has been reiterated many times. I believe, however, that in light of present circumstances it is essential that this public posture be supplemented by covert efforts to protect our enormous equity in a successful election meeting reasonable standards of fairness and honesty. In addition, some other rather considerable advantages will result from a covert program.

"11. Overall, the advantages of initiating a program of covert action are as follows:

"A. An indication to Ky that we have definitely decided to support him under certain circumstances against other candidates should help reconcile him to the loss of General Loan between now and the elections. He will feel that he is trading one advantage for another, but certainly will know that, on balance, he has made a tremendous gain in receiving our support. This support should increase his confidence and reduce his temptation to rely on blatantly illegal tactics.

"B. A covert channel will enable us to conduct a continuing exchange of views with Ky, as well as funneling advice to him on problems of mutual concern. Such a channel should reduce his dependence on the advice of his more undesirable henchmen.

"C. We shall be better able to exert pressure on Ky to develop a constructive program calculated to draw support from many groups which might otherwise be unwilling to gather behind him. We may, therefore, hope to achieve a degree of political unity which, under other circumstances, might never be possible.

“D. A covert relationship will facilitate monitoring all pre-election activities to insure that the campaign is as technically clean as possible, and particularly that the security services are not used by Ky’s group to exert unfair pressures on his opponents. We should make a particular effort to prevent blatant misuse of the censorship power.

“E. Just as important, of course, is the fact that, once elected, we shall have in being a working relationship which should greatly facilitate our influencing the new administration in the direction of an efficient and wise conduct of affairs.

“12. Once a [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] relationship is established with Ky, it is quite likely that he will request some financial support for his campaign. I am assured that this can be done under secure circumstances, and I think we should stand ready to give such help; not only will it increase our influence with Ky in regard to his conduct of political affairs, but it may also help him avoid unwise alliances and dependence on questionable business deals in his effort to finance his political activities. We are, however, not at this point in a position to give any indication of the scale of the financial support which might be required.

[*1 paragraph (12 lines of source text) not declassified*]

“14. I think you will appreciate that it is not possible in this difficult and complicated situation to spell out in complete detail the steps which we would take in the covert field, but I can assure that I will follow and control them closely, working in consultation with the CAS Station Chief. I would hope for your approval to proceed in the very near future, since the present situation does not permit of much delay. Signed, Ellsworth Bunker.”

210. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, June 20, 1967, 0830Z.

28409. Ref: Saigon 28218, State 212155.²

1. At my invitation Thieu, Ky and General Vien came to my house for lunch June 19, together with Ambassador Locke and General Westmoreland. My purpose was to bring Thieu, Ky and Vien together in

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Bundy Files: Lot 85 D 240, Bunker Proposal. Secret; Exdis. Received at 6:20 a.m. and repeated to CINCPAC for POLAD.

² See Document 205 and footnote 7 thereto.

informal surroundings to discuss the question of unity of the armed forces and see whether it would be possible to get some agreement on their part to a public statement subscribed to by all three reaffirming Vien's earlier announcement and containing specific instructions to the armed forces to refrain from involvement in the political situation. I proposed to suggest to them that such a statement be circulated to officers and ranks with specific instructions issued to corps commanders to see that the instructions were carried out.

2. I also wanted to discuss with them certain matters related to the visit of Secretary McNamara and Under Secretary Katzenbach. The luncheon took place in an informal and cordial atmosphere with no evidence of strain between our Vietnamese participants.

3. We informed them of Secretary McNamara's wishes to make this a strictly working visit and to avoid ceremonial and protocolary affairs. General Westmoreland outlined plans which had been prepared for the Secretary's field trips.

4. We then got into the question of additional free world troops, a subject too much discussed in public by both Thieu and Ky, and made it very clear to them that it would not be possible for the President to accede to request for additional troops unless maximum use were made of available Vietnamese manpower. We found ready acceptance on their part of the fact that this would be necessary. General Westmoreland suggested as a measure preliminary to mobilization that the terms of those presently in service be extended and the age of induction reduced. There was agreement by the Vietnamese that this should be done. General Vien suggested that he issue orders for extension of service now without making any public announcement before the elections. There seemed to be general agreement that this would be a good procedure.

5. On the subject of mobilization, Ky asserted that it was important that this should be done as soon as possible (after the elections) by the new government, that the number of Vietnamese troops should be substantially increased and that they certainly could not expect additional free world troops unless they made a greater effort themselves. He felt that mobilization would actually improve morale in the country and would make the people more determined to bring the war to a successful conclusion. Both Thieu and General Vien acquiesced in this view.

6. We then entered into the question of the desirability of a joint statement of non-involvement of the armed forces in politics pointing out that two important principles were involved: (A) free, fair and honest elections, and (B) concentration of the armed forces on fighting the war. Both Thieu and Ky replied that General Vien had made such an announcement and that they had endorsed it frequently. I said that

General Vien's statement had been made some time ago and I felt that it needed to be reinforced and pointed out that rumors were already circulating casting doubt both on the possibility of free elections and the non-involvement of the military: it was not necessarily a fact that mattered so much as what people believed to be true. Consequently I felt it made sense to anticipate these rumors and what was likely to appear in the press. I pointed out that both honest elections and concentration by the military on the war effort had a direct bearing also on the manpower problems we had previously discussed; the free world could not be expected to furnish additional forces if the Vietnamese military was diverted from concentration on the war effort.

7. Ky said that he would be willing to sign such an agreement. Thieu felt that it would be adequate if General Vien should reiterate his statement and instruct his troop information division to see that it was implemented. General Vien then suggested that since the Directorate was the government, it would be a good idea to have the Directorate issue such a statement. Ambassador Locke, General Westmoreland and I all felt this would be even better than having a statement signed by Thieu, Ky and Vien. Ky said that the matter could be taken up at a meeting of the Directorate later today. (Still later at General Vien's reception celebrating Armed Forces Day, Ky told Ambassador Locke and me that he would host a dinner for his Generals and would bring up the matter there. Thieu, however, was rather non-committal.)

8. I do not know what the present odds are on having such a statement issued, but I think that in the light of our talk today if something is not forthcoming within a few days, I will at least be in a position to prod all three into taking some action.

9. We had a general discussion also on other aspects of the war, methods to hold off infiltration, the effectiveness of the bombing and the great importance of the RD program. We made clear the great importance we attached to continued progress on both the military front and in revolutionary development during the election period. They agreed that efforts on these fronts should not be diminished by diversion of attention to the elections.

10. *Comment:* In view of the friendly and informal atmosphere which prevailed throughout the meeting, the fact that everyone present participated freely in the discussions and that agreement had been reached on several important matters, Ambassador Locke, General Westmoreland and I felt that the luncheon had been very worthwhile and that we should repeat the practice at periodic intervals. While I do not expect any miracles to result, it is an opening wedge and I think further such meetings may prove useful.

211. Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State (Bundy) and the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State (Habib) for East Asian and Pacific Affairs¹

Washington, June 20, 1967.

SUBJECT

Analysis of Ambassador Bunker's Proposal for Political Action in Viet-Nam

Ambassador Bunker's Proposal

1. Remove Loan from Viet-Nam.
2. Seek to assure Thieu's withdrawal from the Presidential race.
3. Mount a covert operation of advice and assistance for Ky.

Factors Involved

1. Bunker believes that Loan's activities in support of Ky have reached a point where the bona fides of the election are seriously threatened. Furthermore, he believes that as long as Loan remains in Viet-Nam, and regardless of attempts to curb him, a Ky victory will not be acceptable or defensible in or out of Viet-Nam.

Comment: Loan's present activities are pernicious.² However, Loan serves Ky in many ways, not the least of which is as a watch-dog against the possibility of coups or conspiracies against Ky. Loan is an organizer and a man of action, who has proven his worth and loyalty to Ky many times. He is tough and ruthless, but he can be influenced although not controlled. Ky will not be easily persuaded to get rid of Loan; in fact there is strong doubt that he would do so unless it were made an absolute demand on our part with penalties to follow if denied. Ky's first reaction to our demand would be to insist that he can and will control Loan's activities. Moreover, Loan might not go easily and we could face a move by Loan (with the support of his organization, other generals and the Baby Turks),³ to put pressure on Ky to reject any demand for his removal.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Intelligence File, Vietnamese (South) Elections 1967. Secret; Nodis.

² In an undated memorandum to Bundy, Douglas S. Blaufarb of the CIA listed the various activities of Loan on behalf of Ky, which included smuggling, bribery of candidates by the National Police, innuendoes against other candidates, extortion of government ministries, and interference in local elections. In the June 20 covering note to Bundy, Special Assistant John R. Burke suggested that the assertions were "somewhat thin" and often "contradictory" and that several of the reports "could be interpreted as misleading." (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Bundy Files: Lot 85 D 240, Bunker Proposal)

³ "Baby Turks" was a nickname for the young, ardent ARVN officers in the colonel and lieutenant colonel ranks.

2. Ky's campaign organization includes a number of military and civilian elements other than Loan. Control over them, and limitation of undesirable practices, involves such people as General Khang of III Corps, the commanders of the Air Force, Minister of Information Tri, Minister of Revolutionary Development Thang, and a substantial number of province chiefs and lesser officials.

Comment: Removing Loan will not prevent the organization from pursuing his tactics. The best way to attempt to limit undesirable activities on their part is through Ky. To do so we need not necessarily get in bed with Ky. Rather we should keep before Ky, in as forceful a way as possible, the consequences of his actions and the limits involved. We should also maintain the closest possible contact with other candidates, making it clear we are not supporting anyone.

3. A covert program of advice and assistance to Ky would need to be kept absolutely secret. Despite the assurances given to Ambassador Bunker [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] we doubt very much that this can be done. To be effective our involvement would need to be in depth, and this would drastically increase the chance of word getting around.

Comment: If it becomes known that we are backing Ky, the consequences are obvious and they include the possibility that other candidates will withdraw and point the finger at us. It is, of course, possible that other candidates will withdraw if we do nothing and Ky mounts an unfair campaign. But we would not be the cause and the accused. If we keep our "neutrality" we could at least try to influence other candidates to stay in the race, offer them evidence of our desire for a fair race, and be able to make plausible our actions in support of limitations on mis-use of the Ky organization.

4. General Thieu is at this time quite determined to run. We do not see what can be done or said to him by us that will change his mind. Loan's head would probably not be sufficient. If Thieu were to become aware of the U.S. involvement with Ky that is proposed, we run a real risk that he might try to upset the apple cart within the government and the military.

5. The unity of the military, in particular the avoidance of an outright struggle among the principal leaders, remains essential. A move against Loan, a clear stand for Ky, and an attempt to force Thieu to move over, could add to the pressures working against the precarious balance that exists. Thieu's candidacy has already placed strains on the ties holding the military together, but unless he discovers an underlying lack of support and accepts this reason for his withdrawal, we should be wary of putting direct pressure on him.

Alternative Courses of Action

1. Accept Bunker's proposal—to do so at this time runs too great a risk of either a) a confrontation with Ky if he refuses to remove Loan;

or b) unduly and unnecessarily involving ourselves with Ky's victory with the probability that our role will be known; or c) upsetting the military balance. Covert support runs a serious risk of exposure, and it is questionable how successfully we could staff it.

2. Place great pressure on Ky to limit Loan's actions and those of the other excessively zealous supporters. This means putting Loan on a tight rein. It should involve an approach to Ky through a [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] intermediary, with most specific charges and suggestions. This to be supported in less specific terms by Ambassador Bunker. We might also forthrightly crank up Bui Diem and send him back to Saigon with the message.

3. We could modify Bunker's proposal by leaving Loan in place (or having him give up one of his hats, e.g. the Military Security Service). However, this would be ineffective and might even lead to an impression he would simply work harder on using the police politically.

4. We could consider offering Ky support, and at the same time offer one or more of his rivals support. We might be able thus to work both sides of the street, but the complexity of the operation and the risk of exposure are probably such that we could not pull it off with any clear gain.

Recommended Course:

We recommend holding off on accepting Ambassador Bunker's proposal at this time. We should inform him of our views along the lines of the attached cable⁴ and solicit his further comments. In the meantime the [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] close to Ky could explore the various possibilities in discussion with Ky, with subtlety and no promises. At the same time our Embassy should strengthen its lines to the civilian candidates Huong and Suu. Our current line should be a step-up of measures to influence Loan and the others around Ky, to work on Ky himself directly and through people like Bui Diem.

⁴ Not further identified, but see Document 213.

212. Memorandum From William J. Jorden of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Special Assistant (Rostow)¹

Washington, June 20, 1967.

SUBJECT

Ambassador Bunker's Proposals

I would have to vote against the proposals. I don't think they will work. I think they would do more harm than good.

First, I simply do not agree with the Mission's appraisal—shared to a great extent by State—that Ky is the only choice and that any other would be a disaster. As you know, I think highly of Ky and he might be an effective President. But I have come to believe that the healthiest thing that could happen in Viet-Nam right now would be the election of a civilian. The best government I can think of would be: Huong as President, Big Minh as Vice President, Ky as Prime Minister, and Thieu as chief of the Army.

Ky is a military man—and there is a strong stream of opposition to continuing military rule. He is a Northerner, and the electorate is largely Southern, and regional feelings are strong. He is young, and there remains a deep underlying respect for maturity. Moreover, his campaign, thanks to the activities of Loan and others, is rapidly becoming a source of bitterness.

A good many Vietnamese believe deeply that Ky's election would be proof-positive that corruption, pressure, and bribery dominated the political process.

I urge that we not get out too far on a "Ky is the only man for us" limb.

Further, on the proposals:

—The kind of direct U.S. involvement proposed would be a grave mistake. It would be known. It would put us right in the middle of internal contention. And I recall too many people getting burned in the past when they felt one Vietnamese was indispensable.

—The removal of Loan would not in itself solve the problem of chicanery and manipulation. There are plenty of eager successors in

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Intelligence File, Vietnamese (South) Elections 1967. Secret; Nodis. On his covering memorandum to the President, June 20, Rostow wrote: "The reason for his recommendation on page 2 is: —time is very short, in Bill's judgment; —Bui Diem is trusted by Ky. If not this route, then Bob should get out there fast." A handwritten postscript by Rostow reads: "Perhaps you might talk to Bui Diem on the three key points (p. 2)." The President wrote in response: "I agree, see me."

the wings. It *would* have some useful cosmetic effects, but they would not be long lasting if the same practices persisted.

—I am utterly convinced that a power play against Thieu would backfire badly. It would become widely known, and would put us in a bad light with many thinking Vietnamese. His future is going to have to be worked out in a Vietnamese context.

—Financial assistance for one candidate is a bad idea. This, too, will become known.

This being said, what do we do?

I would favor the following:

1. I would put real heat on Ky to rein in his followers, to do it fast, and to make it stick. I would call in Bui Diem and lay down the law and urge him to return immediately to Saigon with the message. I think you should do this rather than State; it would underline the President's concern and strong feeling.

There are three principal items that need correcting:

- the use of the police and security apparatus in support of Ky;
- inept use of censorship on political matters;
- Ky's use of his position and the machinery of government for political purposes.

I would stress that a dishonest election would undercut our President's position and endanger continued American support. I would state that we are not going to consider any additional U.S. involvement unless we are convinced that Viet-Nam has a reasonable political future and that Vietnamese are putting their country ahead of themselves.

2. Some Vietnamese of real standing and ability has to be put in charge of Ky's campaign. General Thang is an obvious choice, though the blow to RD is obvious. But, again, we get into the indispensable man argument. RD would be a good assignment for Big Minh, though he probably wouldn't take it. How about General Thi? How about a civilian?

3. Instead of backing one man, we should be working closely with *all* candidates. With the deep involvement we have in Viet-Nam, it is shocking that our contacts with the country's leading politicians is so tenuous. I would pick four good men to work with Ky, Thieu, Huong and Suu on a full-time basis. We should touch base regularly with the others, too, but it is less important.

Our contact men should have plenty of political savvy and solid empathy for the Vietnamese. They could provide advice, suggestions, and ideas, and help to keep their man on the track. They would make clear that the U.S. interest was in real democracy and the development of a solidly-based political process. They would also, by their actions, make clear our strict neutrality in the electoral process.

4. The Ambassador should stay very aloof from these proceedings. We have had a succession of envoys who have hurt themselves by over-involvement in politics and personalities. We *are* involved—and deeply—but I urge that we keep the Ambassador out of the front lines.

These, in any case, are my sentiments.

As a footnote: how much money are we putting into the Vietnamese police program? How many advisors do we have working on police and security services and how effective are their contacts with Loan and his subordinates? Doesn't our help—and our contacts—give us any leverage at all? Someone should look into this angle.

Bill

213. Telegram From the Central Intelligence Agency to the Station in Saigon¹

Washington, June 20, 1967.

CIA 0644. For Mr. Hart only. The Department of State has requested that the following cable be passed through our channels to Ambassador Bunker. Please give it to him personally and make no further distribution he does not specifically direct. We would appreciate cabled confirmation of his receipt of this message.

Begin Text:

We have weighed your message to the Secretary (CAS 8185)² with the greatest care. Highest levels have approved this cable designed to give you our thoughts and to elicit your comments.

1. While we do not finally reject your proposal, our initial reaction is strongly negative. We particularly note your underlying judgment that Loan's activities have reached the point where, even if he reforms and elections are conducted reasonably honestly, very few

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Intelligence File, Vietnamese (South) Elections 1967. Secret; Most Sensitive; Immediate. In a covering note to Katzenbach, Rostow, and Bundy, June 20, Carver wrote: "At Mr. Bundy's request, the attached cable—the final text of which was confirmed to me telephonically by Mr. Rostow—was transmitted via Agency channels to Saigon at 2200 EDT, Tuesday, 20 June 1967. No distribution of this cable has been or will be made by this Agency save to the three recipients of this memorandum."

² See Document 209.

Vietnamese will have faith that this has been the case so long as he has remained in his present position. However, your proposed approach raises the most serious problems, as you are of course well aware, and we believe we should at least have an exchange on all the factors and explore whether there is some lesser step that might be attempted before we decide whether to hit Ky frontally on any form of proposal that involves the removal of Loan.

2. For your comment, here are some of the factors that worry us:

A. We could certainly place Loan in some military training course here, and this has the advantage of making his absence temporary. At the same time, given his high visibility and close identification with Ky, we simply do not see that any assignment for him—military training, an Ambassadorship, whatever—would be read in all politically conscious circles (as well as the military) as anything other than an admission of serious wrongdoing by Ky. Would not Ky regard it as a tremendous loss of face? Might not Loan himself react in some highly disruptive way, perhaps even to the point of organizing a group to get Ky to reverse his decision or even to attempt a seizure of power? And would it not break up and demoralize Ky's whole inner group?

B. The effect on Thieu's candidacy seems to us equally uncertain. In a sense, Ky's loss of face would be Thieu's gain, and Thieu would be in a position to say that his candidacy had been undertaken in order to prevent or limit the improper use of government influence in the election, and the Loan removal satisfied him that this would be the case. However, we have grave doubt that Thieu would accept any such reasoning. Might he not decide all the more firmly to run, feeling that he had Ky at a disadvantage with the clear admission of wrongdoing implied by the Loan removal? Might he not, alternatively, press to get rid of others in Ky's entourage such as Tri and Khang, against whom he is equally bitter and who can with some plausibility be linked to the pattern of excessive government involvement? In short, do we really gain or lose with respect to the Thieu/Ky split and the serious chance of continued military division during the campaign?

C. Our assuming a covert supporting role with Ky may indeed be the only price that would get Ky to accept the removal of Loan, but it is a terribly stiff one. Almost certainly Loan himself would be aware of the deal, and we would be to a large extent at the mercy of both Ky and Loan in keeping our role truly covert. To a great many people who do not accept—as we do—your judgment that a Ky victory is the best outcome we can hope for, suspicion and attack would come naturally. Exposure would appear particularly likely if we injected financial support. Above all, we simply do not believe that, in the over-all atmosphere of Vietnamese politics, any extensive relationship could be kept from becoming public. The danger of exposure might be somewhat re-

duced to the degree that we were able to keep our relationship with Ky on at least the ostensible basis of advising with respect to conducting an honest election, but this is no real cover for an extensive program such as you envisage. If we were exposed, or even widely assumed to be supporting Ky covertly, the effect not only on the election but on the standing of a future Ky-led government could be almost fatal.

D. In any event, we would wish to examine any plan for covert action in real detail before agreeing to it. We have doubts not only about keeping it secret but about [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] capabilities to handle it effectively.

3. With these objections in mind, we have thought hard about any alternative ways of bringing about the removal of Loan. We can frankly think of no specific threat or inducement that would do this. A threat to support any of Ky's opponents would surely be unwise (and in the case of Huong, impractical, since we suppose he would not accept covert support even if offered). We are almost driven to consider comments to Ky that would have the effect of threatening him with a change in our whole USG policy of support for South Vietnam if he allows Loan to stay and thus prejudices adequate and accepted integrity of the elections. We do not rule out threatening remarks in this direction—and indeed they would have substantial basis—but it is at best a last resort.

4. Hence, we wonder if, on balance, the removal of Loan is really of such primary importance as to be worth the risk and cost. In searching for alternatives, one appears to be a determined effort to persuade Ky to keep Loan and others on a really tight rein. We are prepared to admit that Loan's actions to date will still have the contaminating effect you cite, and you are of course aware of pending stories, for example by Denis Warner, that will very soon hit us all hard on his conduct. If there is any way to reduce the impact of his staying, it obviously lies in the most dramatic pattern of conduct by Ky of extended reform that can be devised. Part of this might even be a reconsideration of our previous strongly negative attitude on having General Thang resign and become Ky's campaign manager, coupled with an announcement that all officials remaining in the government would stick to their jobs, and that Thang would be responsible for seeing that this was done. We realize that this could have a serious effect on Thang's future usefulness, and on the RD program during the election period. But unless there is somebody with an equal reputation for integrity to throw into the breach, this might be an essential part of this least worst proposal.

5. Along this line, the first move would be a direct approach to Ky. In the first instance, we believe this might be by your best [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] contact, who would have the advantage of not involving your personal credit to the same extent, and

leaving the way open for more drastic representations by you if later required and approved. Accordingly, we would like your comment on a possible approach to Ky which might be along the following lines:

A. USG regards reports of activities of Ky's leading supporters, notably Loan, as totally destructive of whole pattern of reasonably and visibly fair and honest elections that USG regards as essential. Here you would use as many specifics as possible.

B. From its wide contacts, USG is clear that these activities are widely known in SVN political circles and also to responsible US reporters. We expect that there will shortly be extremely damaging stories that will both affect US opinion and have bad playback in Vietnam.

C. Result of present trends can only be to sour entire atmosphere in SVN and produce a situation in which Ky may win, but without any prospect of getting wide civil-military support necessary for successful leadership of his country.

D. USG is not opposing Ky candidacy and indeed considers he has substantial potential for leadership. Nor does USG feel that Ky should refrain from using normal advantages of incumbent government. He should well know the difference between this sort of activity and the kind of excesses now reported to us as being committed. Recent Korean experience should show Ky the damage that can come to even a strongly-based leader such as Park by excessive and corrupt practices by subordinates.

E. USG had been prepared to consult with Ky covertly on ways to have election honest and also limits within which he could make proper use of his normal advantages as incumbent.

F. With all these factors in mind, USG urges Ky immediately to frame convincing correction program, discuss it with contact, and put it into effect. Essential element in any such program would be convincing measures to bring Loan under control and to have all officials confine themselves to their proper duties.

6. The next question is how to get Thieu to withdraw his candidacy. A further attempt to do this might be made if Ky responded to our approach by setting up a real correction program, and if Ky at the same time made a firm offer of chief of the army for Thieu. Alternatively, might Thieu now be finding the limits of his support, so that he could be persuaded by a hard and direct approach even before the correction program is undertaken? Clearly, on your analysis, part of Ky's reason for unleashing Loan has been the Thieu candidacy, and we might have to work out the correction program and Thieu's withdrawal simultaneously.

7. Next, whatever steps we take with Ky and Thieu, we believe that we must have close and continuing contact with principal civilian

candidates in any event, and wonder whether there is more we might be doing in this respect. Such contact would be designed to keep them from taking any drastic action, and to keep close reading of their feelings. Moreover, in terms of the effect on Ky, we believe it should be overt and known to him, and mention of this might be included in our proposed approach by [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] contact.

8. Finally, we believe Bui Diem might be able to play a constructive role. He has told us that Ky wants him back very soon and we could urge him to return at once and give him clear picture of depth of our concern. We doubt whether we should go beyond message in para 5, A-D, with him, however, leaving the real bite of E-F to your [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] contact.

9. Throughout this effort we know that you will have clearly in mind that whatever course we follow we should keep as a primary objective the avoidance of any action which would add to the chances of military disunity. In particular we would like your judgment as to consequences that an action against Loan would have within the group of the military leadership supporting Ky and among the so-called "Baby Turks."

10. Finally, we need your views on how McNamara/Katzenbach visit can best be fitted into any course of action. If you feel it wise to keep this matter wholly in the hands of yourself and members of the Mission, we will completely understand, but the visit may provide special opportunities, and it could be difficult in any event to avoid mention of these central subjects during the visit.

214. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, June 20, 1967, 6:45 p.m.

Mr. President:

Claiborne Pell came in at 6:00 tonight with the attached letter and memorandum of conversation for you.²

We've known one another a long time, but he began by saying quite formally that, as a Senator, he would like to ask for an interview with you. He said he had only asked to see you three times. Of these, two had turned out to be useful, in his judgment: that is, his presentation of his views on Germany and the railroads.

Now he was asking to talk with you directly face to face on Viet Nam.³

I promised to deliver his message.

He said that he was "disappointed" in the interview. He had flown over on Sunday night⁴ and returned on Monday night from Paris. Despite his disappointment, it should be noted:

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Memos to the President, 6/1–8/2/67, Vol. I. Confidential. The notation "L" on the memorandum indicates that the President saw it.

² These attached documents, not printed, relate to Pell's meeting of June 19 with Mai Van Bo, DRV commercial representative in France. In the memorandum of conversation, Pell recounted his 1-day trip to meet with Bo. According to Pell's memorandum, Bo told him that the DRV would enter into negotiations with the United States if the bombing was ended "without condition." Pell asked Bo, who was returning to Hanoi for consultations, to ask his superiors to consider an expanded pre-cessation agreement on mutual de-escalation. The Senator considered the meeting important due to Bo's statement on bombing and an expressed "willingness to negotiate very shortly after cessation of bombing." According to a de-briefing of Pell by Bundy on June 29, the Senator had missed a previously-arranged meeting with Bo on May 27 in Paris, a period when Pell traveled to the *Pacem in Terris* conference in Geneva. (Memorandum of conversation by Bundy, June 29; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET) During the same conference, Bo spoke along the same lines with Baggs and Ashmore; a report of the meeting is in a memorandum from Ashmore and Baggs to Katzenbach, June 14. (Ibid., POL 27–14 VIET/AZTEC)

³ Johnson finally met with Pell to discuss his effort on July 13. (Johnson Library, President's Daily Diary) No notes of the meeting have been found. Rostow asked for the opinion of the State Department; Read reported in a July 31 memorandum: "The Department feels that as presented this formula would not be a workable solution to the Vietnamese conflict." (Ibid., National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. 2 B, Misc. Memos) In early August Pell missed an opportunity to meet with Bo, but did receive a message from him on August 30 stating that Bo had "nothing new to say." Pell sent it to Bundy on September 14, who forwarded it to the President. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Bundy Files: Lot 85 D 240, Top Secret WPB Chron., Sep/Oct 1967)

⁴ June 18.

—Bo's formula is exactly like Kosygin's. They have dropped "permanent" in discussing a cessation of bombing;
 —they say negotiations "will begin" rather than "could begin."

I explained to Pell how difficult it would be to stop bombing if they continue to violate the DMZ and put pressure on our men in I Corps. He said it was for precisely that reason that he pushed "mutual de-escalation" as part of the package ending the bombing.

This request of Bo to see Pell fits in with a number of other indications we have had, stemming from North Vietnamese rather than from Eastern Europeans.

Since the roads in Laos are out with rain, the question to raise with the Vietnamese by one or another of our channels is simply this: if we stop bombing, will you stop crossing the DMZ?

If we wanted to make it more subtle and take into account the problem Kosygin raised with Wilson about the units now in the South, we could say: would you stop sending military units or formations across the DMZ? Implicitly that would mean that fighting would have to stop but they could still try to infiltrate replacement supplies into the South, if we couldn't catch them.

Walt

215. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, June 21, 1967, 1130Z.

28493. For the President from Bunker. Herewith my eighth weekly telegram:

General

1. The second of the reports of top priority matters mentioned in my weekly telegram of May 31,² i.e. action program for stepping up revolutionary development has been submitted to me by Ambassador

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Priority; Nodis. In a June 22 covering note transmitting the telegram to the President, Rostow wrote: "Herewith Amb. Bunker's eighth weekly telegram, full of plans and policy." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 8B(1)[A] Bunker's Weekly Report to the President) The notation "L" on the covering note indicates that the President saw the telegram. This telegram is printed in full in Pike, *The Bunker Papers*, pp. 52–59.

² See footnote 6, Document 186.

Komer. I believe it represents the most complete and comprehensive study including definite and specific recommendations for action that we have had on revolutionary development. Ambassador Komer's proposals have been approved by General Westmoreland and myself.

2. Based on a detailed assessment of where we stand today on pacification, the report develops an action program to give pacification a new thrust during the last half of 1967 and to plan for more rapid advances in 1968. We have given the program the name of Project Takeoff as an indication that we expect to make more rapid progress from here on out (I hope Walt Rostow will recognize the implied compliment). As soon as possible we want to get the GVN to adopt the principles of Project Takeoff and to subscribe to a set of action programs. One thing we want to guard against especially is that the pacification program should not slacken during the election period. Just the opposite should occur. Elections and movement toward responsible representative government is a fundamental part of pacification. Elections should support and foster other pacification efforts and vice versa.

3. In order to get moving rapidly we have limited ourselves to the selections of the most important and most pressing programs in order not to dilute our efforts or overtax the somewhat limited capacities of the GVN. They are the following eight action programs:

- A. Improve 1968 pacification planning.
- B. Accelerate the Chieu Hoi program.
- C. Mount an intensified attack on the Viet Cong infrastructure.
- D. Expand and improve support by the Vietnamese Armed Forces. We hope to add as soon as possible 50,000 RF/PF troops and another 50,000 in 1968, the bulk of which will be assigned to pacification.
- E. Expand and supplement RD team effort and employ also substitute techniques to achieve a more rapid expansion of the pacification program. An example is the combined civil-military teams used in VI Corps by General Vinh Loc to carry on RD work in hamlets which RD teams because of lack of trained personnel are unable to cover.
- F. Increased capability to handle refugees.
- G. Improve and expand the National Police and the police field forces. We hope to bring the National Police up to the year end goal of 74,000 and to expand the police field forces to 17,000.
- H. We plan to increase the advisory structure and increase the number of ARVN battalions in direct support of RD programs from 53 to 60 or more. We also plan to put greater stress on night patrolling, active defense instead of digging in, and rapid employment of mobile reaction forces.

4. As is so often the case, GVN performance remains the crucial factor. Nevertheless I believe by this programming technique, with direct program management on the U.S. side and the systematic evaluation of progress and problems, we cannot help but achieve some increase of effectiveness of the pacification effort. If certain other things happen concurrently, and I believe there is a good chance this will, such

as the successful creation of a functioning, reasonably stable, popularly based government, increased momentum in the anti-main force campaign, a substantial increase in numbers and quality of the pacification security forces, an increase in the Chieu Hoi rate, success in our new plans for attacking VC infrastructure together with better pacification planning and management control, I believe we should see demonstrable and visible pacification progress during 1967-68.

5. The relative lull in military operations which I mentioned in my last message has continued. I believe this has been due to the splendidly executed offensive operations undertaken by General Westmoreland beginning in late April which I referred to in my June 7 message.³ The enemy has been badly hurt, has been kept off balance, and his time schedule has been disrupted. General Westmoreland's strategy of anticipating enemy threats has paid off handsomely.

6. The enemy's offensive thrust has been blunted but not eliminated. Enemy pressures (from two and possibly three divisions) continues along the DMZ. Infiltration through Laos continues steadily and the use of Laotian and Cambodian sanctuaries gives the enemy great and, to my mind, unwarranted advantages. It seems to me apparent therefore that the crux of our military problem is how to choke off NVN infiltration. If ways can be found to do this effectively, it should have at least following advantages:

A) It would drastically reduce the dimensions of our problem in South Vietnam. Militarily we would be dealing only with the Viet Cong whose problems of recruitment and supplies would be enormously multiplied lacking the assistance and reinforcements of North Vietnam. I believe the result would be that the Viet Cong would eventually wither on the vine.

B) After the infiltration is choked off, it should be possible to suspend bombings at least for a period and thereby determine whether there is substance to the statement in many quarters that Hanoi would then come to negotiations; we should at least call their bluff.

C) Tensions now existing between the U.S. and Vietnam on the one side and Cambodia on the other should be, over a period of time, relieved and our relations with Cambodia improved, even though initially Sihanouk might continue to allow the NVA/VC to use Cambodia as a haven and a source of certain supplies.

7. The means to be employed to achieve this objective, of course, present many difficult and delicate problems, both military and political. I have confidence, however, that with imagination and ingenuity these can be met. What is involved, of course, are operations within Laos but I do not believe this fact should present insuperable obstacles. The North Vietnamese Government is a signatory to the 1962

³ Document 192.

Geneva Accords but its forces have been in Laos both before and since the signing of the agreements. Is it now using Laos as the main route for infiltration into South Vietnam. Is it not logical and reasonable, therefore, that South Vietnamese troops should oppose and combat North Vietnamese offensive action by whatever method can be devised in order to prevent the invasion of their country?

Guarantees, of course, would have to be given to the Lao Government by the South Vietnamese, and I believe should be underwritten by us, that Vietnamese troops were on Lao territory for defensive purposes only and would be withdrawn immediately peace is secured. The operation, especially in its preparatory stages, should be carried out with as much security and secrecy as possible. I have made some recommendations as to methods we might use to achieve these objectives in my Top Secret Nodis message to Secretary Rusk (Saigon 28293),⁴ which you will have seen. This is a matter which I believe we should pursue with the utmost concentration.

[Here follows discussion of the Thieu-Ky rivalry, Senatorial candidates, the military situation in I Corps, economic matters, the Chieu Hoi program, and casualties.]

Bunker

⁴ Not found.

216. Memorandum of Conversation¹

Glassboro, New Jersey, June 23, 1967, 3:15–4:30 p.m.

PARTICIPANTS

US

President Lyndon B. Johnson

William D. Krimer, Interpreter, Department of State

USSR

Alexey Kosygin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR

Victor Sukhodrev, Interpreter, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Kosygin informed the President in strictest confidence as follows: In anticipation of a meeting with President Johnson he had two days ago contacted Hanoi in the person of Tran Van Dong [*Pham Van Dong*] as to what he could do during his meeting with the President to help bring this war to an end. Just now, while he was having lunch with the President, a reply from Hanoi had been received. In substance, it amounted to the following: Stop the bombing and they would immediately go to the conference table. Mr. Kosygin did not know what the President's views of this proposal would be, but he wanted to express his own opinion very strongly, to the effect that he thought the President should follow-up this proposal. It provided for the first time the opportunity of talking directly with Hanoi at no risk for the United States. He asked the President to recall the experience of President de Gaulle of France who had fought in Algiers for seven years and still wound up at the conference table. He was sure of the North Vietnamese will to continue to fight for many years if necessary. And what would the President accomplish? He would carry on a war for ten years or more, killing off the best of the young people of his nation. Mr. Kosygin knew that American soldiers fought well, that they knew how to fight, and that they fought willingly since they believed that they were fighting for their country. The young people of the Soviet Union in sim-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 7 US. Top Secret; Nodis. Drafted by Krimer. Other parts of the day's discussions between the two leaders are *ibid*. In a June 21 memorandum to the President, Rostow suggested that above all other U.S.-Soviet issues, especially in light of overtures from the North Vietnamese and recent apparent moderation on the part of the Soviets, "the serious case for talking with Kosygin is Viet Nam." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, USSR, Hollybush II) Several papers on what the President should expect in his talks with Kosygin specifically regarding Vietnam were composed by Cooper and sent to Katzenbach. (Memorandum of June 16 and memoranda of June 22 by Cooper; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S) Complete documentation on the Glassboro Summit is in *Foreign Relations, 1964–1968*, volume XIV.

ilar circumstances would also fight just as well. In his view, it was now time to end the war and to sit down at the conference table and then the President could see what would develop. This could be the very greatest problem which the two of them could resolve here together today: to end this obnoxious war and to let the rest of the world breathe easier because the danger of it spilling over into a bigger war had been removed. He repeated once again that this message was intended for the President only; that this was not to be made public in any way.

The President replied that first of all he agreed to the limitation on disseminating the information provided. Secondly, however, he asked what would happen if we went to the conference table this very minute; would this mean that fighting would continue as it had during the Korean armistice negotiations?

Chairman Kosygin replied that he could not guarantee that the war would end, neither could he guarantee however that it would escalate. With great emphasis he made the point that while the President thought he was fighting the Chinese in North Korea, Mr. Kosygin had to tell him that he was actually helping the Chinese in achieving their very worst designs.

The President said that China represented the very greatest danger to both countries at present, and that he certainly did not want to do anything that would promote Chinese policy.

Mr. Kosygin asked the President to bear in mind that this meeting between them was of an emergency nature, that time was short and that if time were available they would be able to explore the most delicate problems at greater length. While he considered North Viet-Nam's proposal to be the President's own business, he emphatically believed that now the President had ample reason to sit down and negotiate with North Viet-Nam. He had not wanted to take any responsibility upon himself in speaking on behalf of North Viet-Nam and it is for this reason that he had asked for a statement of their position and had received this reply just an hour ago. If the President could see his way clear to follow the proposal, this would be an immense step forward in the right direction. Sooner or later American forces would have to be withdrawn from Viet-Nam and it was better sooner than later. Could the President imagine what great sighs of relief would be heard throughout the world if such a truly historic decision were taken by him now. At several different times in the past, the President had sought an intermediary between the US and North Viet-Nam and had even considered using the offices of some second rate countries, which carried no weight in the world, but here and now there was an opportunity to engage in direct negotiations with Hanoi and he earnestly urged the President to weigh this possibility. Mr. Kosygin would still

be in New York on Saturday and Sunday² and would be glad to transmit any reply the President had to make.

To the President's question of when the Chairman expected to leave the United States, Mr. Kosygin replied that he was leaving on Monday and added, again in confidence, that he would visit Cuba on the way home.

The President asked for additional clarification on the following points: He was informed to the effect that North Viet-Nam had five divisions deployed immediately north of the DMZ. It was the best advice of our military people that if the bombing stopped, these five divisions would be brought to bear upon our Marines immediately south of the DMZ, resulting in a great many casualties among our boys. Mr. Kosygin surely realized that should this happen following the President's decision to stop the bombing, he would be crucified in this country for having taken the decision.

Chairman Kosygin thought that from a practical point of view the question could be put as follows: If the bombing stopped today, representatives of the United States and North Viet-Nam would meet tomorrow, wherever the President wished—Hanoi or New York or Moscow or Paris or Geneva or any other place. From that point on, it would be up to the negotiators to work out what was to follow. In establishing such direct contact with Hanoi, the President could present all questions between the United States and North Viet-Nam and the other side could do the same. Certainly, this could save hundreds of thousands of lives which would otherwise perish in vain. The President could set the condition that if the bombing were stopped, representatives of the two countries should meet at any place designated in, say, two days. Without such direct contact, no solution was possible. The President did not know what they wanted and indeed North Viet-Nam did not know what the President wanted. Mr. Kosygin urged the President to try this step, which in addition carried no risk to the position of the United States. He urged the President to weigh this proposal, he did not then ask for a reply to-day, he asked the President to think it over.³

The President asked the Chairman whether he would and could provide assistance at the conference table, if such a meeting took place, in obtaining self-determination for the people of South Viet-Nam?

² June 24 and 25.

³ During a working dinner between members of the Soviet and U.S. delegations on June 21, Gromyko had told Rusk that the Americans "were turning things topsy-turvy in wanting talks to precede end to bombing. Only way which to create situation where talks could mature is to stop bombing unconditionally." (Telegram 5848 from USUN, June 22; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL US-USSR)

Mr. Kosygin replied that he could not decide this question independently without advice from North Viet-Nam. But, if by tomorrow night the President could inform him of his views and conditions on this question, he would immediately transmit them to Hanoi for a reply.

The President again asked the Chairman whether, assuming that we got to the conference table, the Soviet Union would and could help us obtain an agreement providing self-determination for the people of South Viet-Nam which would ultimately enable us to withdraw our forces. The President had formerly informed Mr. Gromyko that if such an agreement could be obtained, we would be prepared to withdraw our troops regardless of former investment in the area. He would interpret free elections in South Viet-Nam under the supervision of the co-chairmen as fulfilling the conditions of such an agreement.

Mr. Kosygin replied with a suggestion that the question the President had asked him be formulated on paper without reference to Mr. Kosygin or the USSR, that it be addressed to North Viet-Nam, and be given to Mr. Kosygin for immediate transmission to Hanoi. Such a statement should preferably be brief and clear and he, Mr. Kosygin, would consider this to be an important step forward.

The President asked Mr. Kosygin when and where he could meet with him if he would give favorable consideration to addressing such a question to North Viet-Nam? He suggested another meeting with the Chairman on Sunday afternoon at the same place, in other words, at the Glassboro State College.⁴

[Here follows discussion of arms control and the Middle East.]

⁴ A message was prepared that called for a halt to operations by both sides across the DMZ following the cessation of bombing and the opening of talks. See Document 217. The President conditioned the message with the following: "I want you to know that if talks do not lead to peace or if protracted talks are used to achieve one-sided military advantage against us, we shall have to resume full freedom of action." (Memorandum from Rusk to Johnson and attachment, June 24; Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, USSR, Hollybush II, Addendum)

217. Editorial Note

On June 25, 1967, following a luncheon and a meeting on defense systems and the Middle East, which lasted from 1:30 p.m. to 2:45 p.m., the President conferred with Kosygin from 3:20 p.m. to 6:09 p.m. on matters relating to Vietnam. (Johnson Library, President's Daily Diary)

At this session, the President gave Kosygin a message to transmit to the North Vietnamese which read:

"The United States anticipates that it could stop the bombing of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam. The United States further anticipates that, following the cessation of bombing, there could be immediate discussions between representatives of the United States and the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam. These discussions could be held in Geneva, Moscow, Vientiane, or any other suitable location. The United States further anticipates that its own and allied forces in the northern provinces of South Viet-Nam would not advance to the north and that elements of the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam in the northern part of South Viet-Nam and in the southern portions of North Viet-Nam would not advance to the south. The United States anticipates that, if discussions are held between its representatives and those of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, all questions which either side might wish to raise could be raised. The United States would hope, on the basis of the anticipations expressed above, that the results of such talks could be the stabilization of peace in Southeast Asia. The United States would be glad to know of the reactions of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam to the thoughts expressed above." (Attachment to memorandum from Rusk to the President, June 24; *ibid.*, National Security File, Country File, USSR, Hollybush II, Addendum)

Notes of the June 25 meeting are in a memorandum of conversation between the President and Kosygin, June 25. (*Ibid.*)

Kosygin's lukewarm response led to a generally pessimistic assessment of the Glassboro Summit. In a June 28 meeting immediately before Ambassador Bui Diem departed for Saigon in order to brief South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu, Ambassador at Large W. Averell Harriman told the Ambassador that "there was no movement on either the Middle East or Vietnam problems." Harriman added that as far as negotiations were concerned "Kosygin held to the standard Soviet line." (Memorandum for the Record by Cooper, June 28; Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Harriman Papers, Special Files, Public Service, Chronological File, June 1967)

President Johnson commented along the same lines when he briefed former President Dwight Eisenhower on the meeting during a telephone conversation of June 25:

"On Vietnam, he said we got to stop our bombing. We've got to pull out (that's what he said on television) and just get all of our troops out. That we were the aggressors there; we were the invader there; we were the perpetrator of aggression. Not anything else will do—no substitute. We exchanged some views and I asked some questions of him in that connection, and asked him—what would happen if we stopped our bombing, would they talk and if so how long and would it be another Korea talk to delay it or would it be serious, what could come from it and could he guarantee, underwrite, or ensure or what did he think. The net of it was just another line of 'stop the bombing, send your troops home, then things will work out.'" (Johnson Library,

Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and Eisenhower, June 25, 1967, 9:44 p.m., Tape F67.13, PNO 1 and 2)

Additional documentation on the Johnson–Kosygin meetings is in the National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 7 US.

218. Telegram From the Station in Saigon to the Central Intelligence Agency¹

Saigon, June 26, 1967.

CAS 8486. Following is the text of a message which Ambassador Bunker approved at 1820 hours (Saigon time) 26 June and asked to be passed to the Secretary of State:

"I have studied the Department's message of 21 June, received through CAS channels,² in the light of Ky's decision to rein in Loan as first reported in [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*].³ Ky's proclaimed intentions, which have been reported fairly liberally in the press, will have a salutary effect if he follows through on them in good faith.

"It appears that, although Ky's welcome decision to restrain Loan was the result of a number of pressures on him, the program which he put forth was in fact one suggested to him behind-the-scenes by some of his close associates. (CAS Headquarters has further information on this subject.)

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Sensitive. A June 26 covering memorandum from Carver to Read explained that the reports carried in [*text not declassified*] and TDCS DB–315/02242–67 reported Ky's decision, which was based upon meetings that two of his advisers had with [*text not declassified*] of the Saigon CIA Station. "Ambassador Bunker, who was of course kept fully conversant with these developments, told Mr. Hart he was delighted with the initial apparent result of the advice passed quietly to Ky through the informal channels outlined above and suggested that additional advice to Ky be passed through this mechanism, provided the necessary policy approval is obtained from Washington," Carver reported. (Ibid.) Rostow's covering note transmitting the telegram to the President, June 26, reads: "Here is where Bunker stands on Loan–Ky–Thieu. Could be worse." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Intelligence File, Vietnamese (South) Elections 1967) A notation on the note indicates that the President saw the telegram.

² CAS Hqs. Message No. 0644. [Footnote in the source text. The cable is printed as Document 213.]

³ TDCS DB–315/02242–67. [Footnote in the source text. The report was not found.]

"The fact that Ky was so receptive to constructive advice on this occasion indicates that we would be missing an important opportunity by not insuring that he continues to receive sound advice in the future. What is necessary, in my view, is a more or less continuous consultation with Ky as outlined in the Department's para 5E.⁴ This would allow us, for example, to follow up with him to be sure that he actually implements the plans for fair treatment of all candidates to which he has given considerable publicity during the past few days. Unless we do ride herd on him on this matter, however, I regret to say that I have grave doubts that he will in fact live up to his promises.

"What I have in mind, therefore, is not in any sense an 'extensive' program, nor one which is likely to lay us open to embarrassing charges. Within the framework of advising Ky on ways to keep the election honest, we can also give him advice on acceptable uses of his present position in the interests of his own candidacy. If he takes our advice to heart, as I believe he may, we will be much better off having him run a successful, more or less orderly, and reasonably honest campaign on the basis of our behind-the-scenes guidance than we could be if he is left to his own rather unpredictable devices. The latter alternative will almost certainly lead to abuses of power for which, however impartial our position may in fact have been, we will receive rather widespread blame.

"I agree that part of our continuous consultation with Ky can be carried out via an American CAS representative, and propose to proceed with an updated version of what the Department has suggested in its para 5. [7 lines of source text not declassified]

"As I said in my message of 19 June through CAS channels (CAS Saigon Message No. 8185),⁵ I believe we should stand ready to consider giving covert financial help if Ky requests it. However, there is no evidence to indicate at the moment that Ky is actually in need of such help. I suggest, therefore, that consideration of this problem be deferred until the arrangements which I have proposed above have given us a better idea of Ky's thinking about the conduct of his campaign and his plans to support it.

"On the problem of General Thieu, the passage of time has resulted in the battle lines forming and stiffening, and I rather doubt at this late date that Thieu can be persuaded to retire from the contest. Whatever the effect of his candidacy on military unity, it would probably be counterproductive for us to try to do anything about it. I believe, therefore, that we will be best advised to throw our influence in

⁴ i.e., para 5E of CIA Hqs. Message No. 0644. [Footnote in the source text.]

⁵ Sent in CIA telegram 7697, Document 209.

the direction of doing everything we can to keep Ky's campaign reasonably honest and his treatment of other candidates as fair as can be expected. If he then runs the sort of campaign which we would like him to and does not abuse his hold over the national administrative structure, he should increase the respect with which he is already held in many quarters. Given the considerable lead which Ky probably has over any of the other principal candidates, under these circumstances the damage which can be done by Thieu's rival military candidacy will be held to the minimum and, all in all, we should come out of the affair in September reasonably well.

"I hope you will agree that, under the circumstances, the modest actions proposed above provide our best hope of realizing full advantage from forthcoming elections. Should the Department disagree with the actions proposed above, I hope you will let me know in the very near future."

**219. Memorandum From the Under Secretary of State
(Katzenbach) to President Johnson¹**

Washington, undated.

SUBJECT

Message to Ambassador Bunker

I have prepared the attached to carry out your instructions at lunch.²

I respectfully urge, however, that you amend the message to permit Bunker to comment and to give his view on the wisdom of this

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Intelligence File, Vietnamese (South) Elections 1967. Secret. Rostow sent this memorandum to the President on June 28 at 9:55 a.m. with the comment: "Herewith Nick, having thought over your instruction at lunch, asks that we give Bunker a chance to comment before we execute the order." A notation on the covering note indicates that the President saw the memorandum. The regular Tuesday Luncheon met on June 27 from 1:20 p.m. to 2:40 p.m. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary) No record of the meeting has been found.

² The attached draft instructions to Bunker requested that he inform Ky and Thieu that the inability to decide on one military candidate, as promised at Guam, "presents a grave threat to unity of military and apparently has contributed to atmosphere of doubt on honesty and integrity of elections." The Ambassador should add that the President wanted the issue "worked out at once—and commitments kept—on some fair basis of common understanding." (Ibid., National Security File, Intelligence File, Vietnamese (South) Elections 1967) A revised and expanded version of this message was sent and is printed as Document 222.

major step. This could be done simply by inserting the words “subject to your comment if you see any objection” at the very beginning of the message.

I believe Ambassador Bunker’s judgment is necessary for the following reasons:

a. He himself clearly believes that it is fruitless at this moment to try to get Thieu to withdraw. (His CIA/channel cable received yesterday.) So does Westmoreland.³

b. All our information, for example from Tran Van Do, tends to support the judgment that Thieu is so bitter at Ky that he will not pull out now.

c. In our own judgment, the proposed action *at this time* would be construed by both men as telling Thieu to get out in front of Ky. At the time the promise was made to you in Guam, both men were on even terms. This is no longer so. Ky is much further along than Thieu in every respect having picked a running mate, set up an organization, and all the rest. Thieu has not done any of these things and is thus the only one in a position to withdraw without drastic loss of face.

d. A renewed intervention in these conditions can only mean to Thieu that we are backing Ky. Since the message would be delivered in the presence of both, any action taken under it would almost surely be leaked by one or the other very rapidly. Ky would treat it as an American endorsement not only of his being the military candidate, but his being *the* candidate backed by the US.

e. For these same reasons, the message in oriental terms would be a drastic blow to Thieu’s face and prestige if he acted on it. Far from getting him to withdraw, there is a very substantial chance that it would dig him in for keeps. As matters stand, he still might withdraw if he sees Ky’s strength is too great and if Ky has removed his present grounds for claiming that Ky is acting corruptibly and excessively.

f. Both Ky and Thieu have individually been reminded of the Guam promise several times, and once as a direct message from you.⁴

In short, it is my own considered judgment that the message is at best a gamble and involves certain built-in drawbacks. At the very least, I believe you should have Ambassador Bunker’s judgment before directing him to proceed in this manner.

Nicholas deB Katzenbach

³ The last sentence is handwritten by Katzenbach. Reference is to Document 218.

⁴ In a handwritten footnote Katzenbach noted the times Ky and Thieu were contacted on the matter and by whom: “Ky—April 20–Lodge; May 30–Bunker; June 14–Bunker. Thieu—May 4–Westmoreland; May 26–Bunker; June 15–Bunker.”

220. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, June 28, 1967, 0930Z.

29059. For the President from Bunker. Herewith my ninth weekly telegram:

A. General

1. The half way mark in 1967 coinciding as it does with the completion of two years of the present government and with the approaching elections may mark a good time to attempt to cast up a balance sheet of developments here. We shall be doing this in detail during the visit of Secretary McNamara and Under Secretary Katzenbach next week. This is obviously a difficult and complicated undertaking involving many questions of judgment and some imponderables. I thought it might be worthwhile, however, if I were to attempt a summary of the more important elements relative to the present situation and prospects ahead as I and others here see them.

2. The military situation has greatly improved. The North Vietnamese army has not won a single major victory in the South, on the contrary has suffered ever heavier losses on the battlefield. At home much of their infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed, half of their aircraft destroyed, an estimated half million people diverted to repair of war damage, and the movement of men and supplies made infinitely more difficult. Food shortages have developed. It seems apparent that physically and materially the country has been badly hurt.

3. By contrast South Viet-Nam has made substantial progress in a good many ways. On the political front there has been a stable government for two years, a Constituent Assembly has been elected, a Constitution drafted and promulgated, village and hamlet elections held and Presidential and Congressional elections scheduled for September and October.

4. Inflationary pressures are severe, but these have been kept under reasonably good control. While prices have gone up, food supplies are ample.

5. Vietnamese armed forces are being steadily improved and in many instances have turned in excellent performances.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Priority; Nodis. Rostow sent this telegram to the President under a covering note dated June 29 in which he stated: "Herewith Amb. Bunker's mid-year summary. The priorities are clear: the task is to move on them." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 8B (1)[A] Bunker's Weekly Report to the President) The notation "L" on the covering note indicates that the President saw the telegram. This telegram is printed in full in Pike, *The Bunker Papers*, pp. 60–68.

6. Pacification is gaining some momentum.

7. Defections to the GVN under the Chieu Hoi program are running at nearly twice the 1966 rate.

8. There are other aspects of the picture, however, which must be considered. While the enemy offensive has been blunted, it has not been eliminated. Infiltration continues from the North at an estimated rate of 6,500 a month. Hanoi's determination does not seem to have been seriously affected by the severe physical punishment it has taken. Indeed there is one school of thought which holds that North Viet-Nam is determined to continue the struggle with the expectation that we will eventually tire of carrying the heavy burden involved in our effort. There is apparently no present indication of Hanoi's desire to enter into negotiations. And it seems quite possible that the Soviets and Communist China may have some kind of open end commitment to keep North Viet-Nam supplied with weapons and matériel.

9. On the South Vietnamese side there are also problems.

10. With two military Presidential candidates there is danger that the armed forces will become politically involved and diverted from the essential task of fighting the war.

11. As far as the electoral process itself is concerned, Ky's arbitrary use of censorship and General Loan's activities have been subject to widespread criticism. Serious doubt has been cast on the possibility of holding honest elections.

12. Although ARVN/RF/PF have been greatly improved, there is still a long way to go. Leadership, ability to cope with guerrilla warfare, and security are areas in which there are still substantial deficiencies.

13. This is especially true of the ARVN/RF/PF involvement in the pacification program. The crux of the program is adequate Vietnamese motivation and involvement, for pacification in the final analysis must be done by the Vietnamese. No matter how efficient the organization of our role in pacification may be, without Vietnamese carrying the main burden the program cannot succeed.

14. This is true not only of pacification but of all the other aspects of the effort here—military, economic, political, and social. Lack of involvement and motivation are evident in the apathy, inertia, widespread corruption and incompetence one finds in many areas of the civil administration.

15. In this connection I believe that we lack adequate means of finding out what the Vietnamese people are really thinking and what their aspirations are. There is no fully adequate opinion-taking organization here, such as we had in the Dominican situation. I believe this is a serious deficiency for we ought to know more about what Viet-

namese are thinking, especially the 55 percent to 60 percent of the population which lives outside of the cities. However, from soundings throughout the country, security and social justice, especially getting rid of corruption, seem to be highest on the list. There is obviously great deficiency in both.

16. While there is much work still to be done on many counts and many obstacles to overcome it seems to me that we should continue to concentrate on our main priority objectives. I believe these to be:

A) A vigorous, imaginative and flexible prosecution of the war within acceptable limits. Here, as I have stated previously (Saigon 28293),² it seems to me that the crux of our military problem is how to choke off NVN infiltration. I believe ways can be found to do this effectively and that we should pursue this matter with the utmost urgency.

B) Through free and honest elections establishing a broadly based, stable, functioning, constitutional government. It will require constant vigilance on our part to see that electoral procedures are kept free and honest; and that the fact of their being so is credible. There is fortunately evidence now that our pressures on Ky in this respect are beginning to have some effect.

C) An expedited pacification program which will win the allegiance of the Vietnamese people including the Viet Cong, and which offers them the opportunity to become part of the social fabric of the country.

D) Reorientation of the mission of the Vietnamese armed forces and their revitalization with increased emphasis on improvement and quality.

E) The optimum use of available manpower. This study is already underway under Ambassador Locke. We have discussed some of the problems including the need of mobilization after the elections with Thieu and Ky. We have found them both receptive and understanding of the need to move ahead on this vitally important matter.

F) Economic stability and development. Economic stability will depend on our ability to restrain the inflationary pressures. Economic development is an essential means to political progress especially as it affects the more than half of the Vietnamese who live in the villages and the hamlets. Production can be increased through imaginative and carefully conceived programs, despite the war. Looking to the longer run, it seems to me that the work of the Lilienthal group in planning long range economic development is both important and hopeful. I doubt if there is any better political weapon than involving the Viet-

² See footnote 4, Document 215.

namese people in their own development, to let the people themselves plan and carry out activities through which they can increase their incomes and improve their lives.

17. There is obviously much work still to do. Balancing out the pluses and minuses, however, I find none of the latter insuperable. The Vietnamese are intelligent, hard-working, and if properly guided, encouraged and well led can perform effectively. I believe that we are making steady progress and are gradually achieving our aims in Vietnam. If we stick with it and reinforce the success already achieved, I am confident that we shall come out very well in the end.

[Here follows discussion of political, economic, and military matters.]

Bunker

221. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, June 28, 1967, 10:30 a.m.

Mr. President:

For what it's worth:

1. My gut feeling is that Hanoi is moving towards negotiations.
2. Critical to its decision is whether we have the domestic and international base to give Westy his 200,000 extra men. If we don't, they may sweat us out an extra year or so.
3. Therefore, we should firmly proceed down the track you outlined to the King of Thailand yesterday.²
4. Without being too noisy about it we should keep the heat on the transport facilities around Hanoi and especially the transport links between Haiphong and the other ports and Hanoi. We've found something of a bottleneck there.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Memos to the President, 6/1–8/2/67, Vol. I. Confidential. Received at 11:20 a.m. The notation "L" on the memorandum indicates that the President saw it.

² The President met alone with King Bhumipol Adulyadej in the Oval Office from 5:20 p.m. to 6:15 p.m. on June 27. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary) The memorandum of their conversation, June 27, is *ibid.*, National Security File, Country File, Thailand, Vol. VI, Memos 3/67–8/67.

5. If this view is right, we may never have to use the 200,000 men—just as we never had to conduct the great offensive of 1919 or actually invade Japan at the end of 1945.

6. The Soviet performance in the Middle East and Kosygin's talks at Hollybush³ have strengthened your position in Hanoi.

Walt

³ Reference is to the Glassboro Summit.

Policy Decisions and the McNamara and Clifford–Taylor Missions to South Vietnam, June–August

222. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam¹

Washington, June 28, 1967, 1:51 p.m.

217671. 1. We are increasingly concerned, as we know you are, about growing division of Ky and Thieu and consequences of this division to electoral processes, military unity, and American public opinion.

2. The President desires that you seek early meeting with Ky and Thieu, accompanied by Locke and Westmoreland. You should convey forceful and unequivocal message to both men reminding them that each personally assured President Johnson at Guam that they would so arrange things that they would support one man. You should tell them that acting on this assurance, and respecting the personal integrity of each, President Johnson has repeatedly assured Congressional leaders and the American public that there would be no division between Thieu and Ky, they would support only one candidate and that the present government would not permit the election to cause divisions among its leaders. Therefore, the present situation leaves the President in an impossible position which simply cannot be explained to the American Congress or the American people. The continuance of this situation would deliver a severe blow not only to the election process but to public and Congressional support in the United States for the Government of South Viet-Nam.

3. It is already clear that the continued failure of Thieu and Ky to achieve the understanding which they promised President Johnson so unequivocally now presents a grave threat to unity of the military and has already contributed to an atmosphere of doubt with respect to the

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Intelligence File, Vietnamese (South) Elections 1967. Top Secret; Priority; Nodis; Literally Eyes Only for Ambassador. Drafted by Katzenbach on June 27, cleared by Walt Rostow, and approved by Katzenbach. Repeated as telegram CAP 67599 from Rostow to the President at the LBJ Ranch, where it was received at 6:29 p.m. on June 29. (Ibid.) The President stayed at the ranch June 29–July 9. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary) On June 27 Thieu filed his formal candidacy application, listing Trinh Quoc Khanh, a leading Hoa Hao politician, as his running mate; later that day Ky announced that when he formally declared his candidacy, Nguyen Van Loc would be his running mate.

honesty and integrity of elections and presents us with mounting dangerous political problems here.

4. President Johnson has the highest respect and esteem for both Thieu and Ky. The United States has not interfered in the election processes and has not supported one or another candidate and does not intend to do so. We have relied heavily on their positive assurances that whatever problems might arise they could and would be worked out by Thieu and Ky on the basis of common understanding and common dedication to the cause of free and independent South Viet-Nam. How they work out any personal differences for the good of their country is their responsibility, but President expects that it will be done and that they will honor their joint and individual assurances to him.

5. You may, in your discretion, deliver this message to Ky and Thieu jointly, or individually. But you should make it crystal clear that President Johnson feels that if commitments made to him, on which he has heavily relied, are not fulfilled our mutual efforts will suffer grave and devastating set back here which we cannot recover from soon.²

Rusk

² According to telegram LBJWH 7135, June 29, the President thought this message was approved on June 27, but it had not been delivered. He asked Rostow to "please urge Bunker to get it delivered." (Ibid., National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, White House Cables—Back Channels—Incoming, Outgoing)

223. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, June 29, 1967, 1000Z.

29167. Ref State 217671.²

1. I fully understand the concern expressed in reftel regarding the related matters of the Thieu–Ky rivalry, military unity and the electoral processes, and their potential effect on American opinion. I have discussed these problems with Locke and Westmoreland and we are fully agreed on the following views.

2. Dept will have seen Saigon 29152³ reporting on the series of high level GVN military meetings of the past two days. [We] have been discussing various aspects of this problem and the additional complicating factor of Big Minh's public entry on the stage. We understand that there are further meetings going on today. I think the reports of the meeting of the division commanders on July [June] 28 and of the Directorate meeting that evening are encouraging in that they indicate growing awareness of the need to work out a solution and some movement in that direction. This is a delicate and complicated process involving typically Asian questions of "face" and prestige. Our role in it can be critically important in helping to lead the way to a solution or conversely in injecting factors which make it more difficult to find a mutually acceptable answer. It is for this reason that we have been trying to lead them along to work out their own solutions. If we can do this, it will be good for them and good for us. I have an instinctive feel-

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Intelligence File, Vietnamese (South) Elections 1967. Top Secret; Immediate; Nodis. Rostow repeated the text of this telegram as CAP telegram 67595 to the President at the LBJ Ranch. In his prefatory comments, he informed Johnson that Bunker proposed "to have Westy find out from Vien what happened at the Directorate meeting and the session of Division Commanders on June 28" and then "execute the instruction" separately with both Ky and Thieu. (Ibid.)

² Document 222.

³ In telegram 29152 from Saigon, June 29, Bunker reported on the decision by the Generals of the Directorate not to permit Duong Van Minh to return from exile in Bangkok. They also acted to compel Ky and Thieu to come together and discuss their differences. In addition, at a separate meeting of ARVN division commanders on June 28, an agreement was reached that neither they nor their subordinates would become involved in election politics. Bunker concluded that "there has been some clearing of the air and probably some progress in the direction of sterilizing the military from the electoral process." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Intelligence File, Vietnamese (South) Elections 1967) In telegram CAP 67596 to the President at the LBJ Ranch, June 29, Rostow informed him that the Embassy in Saigon reported that a press story of an impending military coup was false. The telegram then repeated the text of telegram 29152 from Saigon. Rostow characterized it as "the best account we have on the military meetings of the 28th," but noted Westmoreland would try to get more information from Vien. (Ibid.) For an account of Westmoreland's meeting with Vien, see Document 226.

ing that there is already some measurable progress towards removing the military from direct involvement in the electoral process. Our June 19 luncheon⁴ seems to have been helpful and its effect as well as General Cao Van Vien's efforts on the subject are being felt. Our objective at the moment should be to keep this process going and to avoid moves which might be counterproductive. We should, of course, be prepared to move in if a serious impasse seems to be developing.

3. With the foregoing as background, we believe that our first effort should be to get a clear and authoritative view of where things stand today. To this end Westmoreland will see Vien either this evening or tomorrow morning. He is the responsible military authority, is probably the most disinterested and apolitical of the key Generals, and we believe he is genuinely seeking the sort of solution we want.

4. Following this sounding we will consider what is the best next move. It is our judgment that a meeting of all three of us with Thieu and Ky together might only freeze the situation unduly and put one or the other in a position where his face or prestige becomes irrevocably involved. (This appears to be the chief factor behind Thieu's present stubborn insistence on running for the Presidency despite his own feeling that he will lose.) It would also inevitably attract public attention and that at a moment when the city is rife with rumors and speculation as the June 30 deadline for filing draws near and as the stories of Big Minh's move circulate in a variety of forms.

5. Because of similar considerations, believe we should give further consideration also to the desirability of all three of us seeing Thieu and Ky separately or whether I should see them alone.⁵ Depending on Vien's comments and reactions, we should then consider when and how to see Thieu and Ky, separately, to discuss the situation and to convey the essence of the President's concern expressed in reftel. I would hope that the processes already at work may by then suggest the way in which our common objectives on this key question can best be achieved.

Bunker

⁴ See Document 210.

⁵ See Document 225.

224. Telegram From the Central Intelligence Agency to the Station in Saigon¹

Washington, June 29, 1967, 7:13 p.m.

CIA 0685. For Mr. Hart only. The Department of State has requested that we pass the following message from Mr. Katzenbach, the Acting Secretary, to Ambassador Bunker through our channels. Will you please hand it personally to Ambassador Bunker and cable us confirmation of his receipt of this message.

Begin Text: To Ambassador Bunker from Acting Secretary:

1. We have your message of June 26² and have studied it carefully.
2. We approve continuous consultation with Ky within the framework of advising him on ways to keep the election honest and giving him advice on acceptable uses of his present position. We would like to know immediately about all the contacts that take place under this arrangement, including particularly what is said on the US side. Please use a special reporting series with an appropriate code name.
3. We likewise concur in the use of covert Vietnamese assets as part of this channel. Obviously, every precaution should be used to insure security and to keep the record clear in case there should be any compromise.
4. We note that according to [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*]³ Ky has removed Loan as head of the MSS and has convened a meeting of all province and district chiefs. [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*]³ also reported Ky as preparing to convene all candidates, after July 5, to offer them facilities and guarantees of equal campaigning, and we understand that he has already announced his intention to hold this meeting. We believe that an immediate contact is needed to be sure that Ky is following up on the meeting of province and district chiefs and the meeting with the candidates and to confirm that Loan is indeed being kept under control.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Intelligence File, Vietnamese (South) Elections 1967. Secret; Immediate; Most Sensitive. Released by Carver who confirmed the transmittal at Bundy's request in an attached memorandum to Read, June 29.

² Document 218.

³ Not further identified.

5. We continue to be seriously concerned with the security aspects of any covert financial help to Ky. Pending further exchanges, no encouragement should be given in this direction.⁴

⁴ A June 29 memorandum from INR's Deputy Director of Coordination William Trueheart, to Hughes detailed a discussion among representatives of EA, INR, and the CIA which occurred on June 22. The section of the memorandum on Vietnam reads: "Mr. Colby said that his people had been doing considerable thinking both here and in the field about the upcoming elections in South Vietnam. While the Station had some covert capabilities, he was not actually recommending that anything be done. [3 lines of source text not declassified] Mr. Bundy said that he hoped that we could keep hands off in this election. Mr. Habib was vehement in his disclaimer of any interest whatsoever in trying to influence the outcome of the election in this manner. He argued that so far it did not appear that it would be necessary for us to take any action; even if we took action we might wish, instead of putting money in the elections, to put pressure on the various candidates and particularly Ky to conduct an honest election." (Department of State, INR/IL Historical Files, East Asia and Pacific General File, East Asia, FE Weekly Meetings, 1967)

225. Telegram From the White House Situation Room to President Johnson in Texas¹

Washington, June 30, 1967, 0050Z.

CAP 67601. For the President from Katzenbach.

Bob McNamara, Walt Rostow and I all believe that Ambassador Bunker fully appreciates the seriousness and urgency of your message,² but is attempting to accomplish the result we desire in the manner least calculated to do damage to other relations. We all agree that he should be left discretion as to approach but that the message should be delivered as soon as possible. To make sure that this is accomplished expeditiously, I would send out the attached message which, I believe, reflects our views. It should go out tonight, since it is already Friday³ morning in Saigon. Message follows.

"You may use your own judgment in how best to present to Thieu and Ky the points made in our earlier message.⁴ As you fully appre-

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Intelligence File, Vietnamese (South) Elections 1967. Secret; Nodis; Eyes Only. The cable was received at the White House Situation Room at 9:33 p.m. on June 29. A notation on the telegram indicates that the President saw it. Jim Jones wrote a note on the telegram quoting the President as follows: "Yes send it, against it but nothing else I can do."

² See footnote 2, Document 222.

³ June 30.

⁴ Document 222.

ciate, the point is that the message should be gotten across in the most effective way possible. Our suggestion that you be accompanied by Locke and Westmoreland was designed to emphasize as strongly as possible the importance that we attach to the commitments made and the seriousness of any breach to President Johnson in the light of his assurances to leading members of Congress.

We fully appreciate the delicacy of the issues raised and the dangers involved in such direct and forceful action. You are quite right in wishing to know exactly where things stand and in weighing the pros and cons of various approaches. But we feel very strongly that Ky and Thieu should be made aware in forceful and urgent terms of the importance that we attach to the points made. How you accomplish this is left to you but we feel the sooner it can be done the better."⁵

⁵ The Department transmitted this message to Bunker in telegram 219435 to Saigon, June 30. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Intelligence File, Vietnamese (South) Elections 1967)

226. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, June 30, 1967, 1235Z.

29258. Ref Saigon 29140.²

1. I have just seen the Prime Minister and General Westmoreland has just talked with General Cao Van Vien. As a result of these two

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Flash; Exdis. Received at 9:15 a.m. and repeated to CINCPAC for POLAD. Rostow sent the text of this telegram to the President at the LBJ Ranch as telegram CAP 67608, June 30, where it was received at 10:50 a.m. He prefaced the telegram with the observation: "Here is how they appear to have worked it out in their smoke-filled room." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Intelligence File, Vietnamese (South) Elections 1967) The Directorate announced publicly later that day that Thieu and Ky would run on the same ticket as Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates, respectively. In telegram CAP 67621 to the President in Texas, June 30, Roche observed: "So far our luck is holding in Saigon but I would urge that we take out immediate coup insurance. Suggest that General Westmoreland inform ARVN that U.S. will block any coups." A notation by Jones written on the telegram quotes the President's directive: "pass on to Walt." (Ibid.)

² In telegram 29410 from Saigon, June 30, Bunker made an initial report on the meeting of the Directorate that lasted until late evening on June 29 and resumed early the next morning. Thieu had been offered a position as Chief of the Joint General Staff and the Ministry of Defense. Ky was not prepared to step down. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S)

conversations, we have what appears to be a fairly reliable picture of the very interesting developments that have transpired in the last 48 hours.

2. Ky said he wished to give me a very frank account of what had happened. He declared that for two days and two nights the 50 or 60 officers in the Armed Forces Council had tried to persuade Thieu to drop his candidacy and agree to become Defense Minister and Chief JGS if Ky's ticket were elected. Ky said these sessions were extremely emotional with many of the Generals in tears, but with a deep common objective that the armed forces must find a way to unite and to avoid the divisions that were tearing them apart. Finally, at one o'clock this morning, Thieu agreed to this solution and it was left that the final arrangements would be worked out at a meeting this morning.

3. At that meeting, Thieu said he had changed his mind and had decided that he would resign and run for President as a private citizen. Ky then declared that the armed forces cannot have two candidates, that military unity came above everything else, and that they had given an absolute commitment to this effect at Guam to President Johnson. He then told them that he would retire from the race and return to the air force. The other Generals said that Thieu alone could not win the election and that they must run together. Ky said he finally agreed to their pleas, but he laid down the conditions that he would have the right to name the Cabinet and to control the armed forces. These conditions were accepted by all concerned. Ky commented to me in this connection that with this agreement he (Ky) could now move ahead immediately to improve the morale and effectiveness of the forces.

4. Vien confirmed Ky's account in his conversation with Westmoreland. Vien said that the corps commanders had carried the debate as they had insisted that the armed forces could not be held together if there were two candidacies. The final decision was reached before lunch today among the top Generals, and [when] the division commanders were informed after lunch, the division commanders cheered. Vien agreed that it would now be both possible and desirable to step up military operations during the pre-election period and this would be helpful in keeping the military separated from the electoral process.

5. Vien praised Ky's behavior during the meetings and said that the solution could not have been reached if he had not done what he did. Ky told me that after the meeting General Vinh Loc, a very proud man, had said that he never used the word "admire," but that he now wished to say that he admired what Ky had said and done. I told Ky that I also admired his attitude and congratulated him on what he had done.

6. We have learned that in a backgrounder to a few foreign newsmen late this afternoon General Thang described the foregoing in very

general terms, giving Ky full credit for the move to run as Vice President. Thang added that there was never any question of a caretaker government. He believes that Thieu and Ky will really work together again as they have in the past. Vien also told Westmoreland this. Thang added that the Generals are very happy at the solution and see an end to the danger of a military split. Thang expressed his admiration for Ky's sacrifice and patriotism.

7. In his conversation with me Ky said that the decision not to permit Big Minh to return before September 3 was final. He added that if Minh were admitted then other Generals such as Khanh and Thi would have to be let back. Thang confirmed this decision in his backgrounder.

8. *Comment:* I believe Ky deserves full credit for his attitude and for his willingness to step aside in the face of Thieu's intransigence. I'm sure that his standing among the military has been greatly enhanced.³

9. There are certain obvious problems created by this compromise solution, but it should serve to end the growing tensions within the military and stabilize to some degree what was becoming a dangerously fluid situation. We will comment further on these matters tomorrow. It will now become the military versus the civilians and we are already giving thought as to how we should meet this problem and will be sending you our thoughts shortly.

Bunker

³ In his next weekly cable to the President, telegram 305 from Saigon, July 5, Bunker continued to praise the Prime Minister's selfless act for national unity: "Ky, of course, played an essential role in the final decision and I have commended him for his part in it. He was well ahead of the other candidates at the time, a lead enhanced by the proliferation of civilian candidates and Thieu's own admission that he could not be elected. Consequently, Ky has made a very real sacrifice in the interests of unity of the armed forces and of the country. I have told him, however, that I feel certain that in the long run his stature and prestige will be increased by this patriotic action." (Ibid., POL 27 VIET S) This telegram is printed in full in Pike, *The Bunker Papers*, pp. 69–77.

227. Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (Bundy) to Secretary of State Rusk¹

Washington, June 30, 1967.

SUBJECT

Possible Developments in Hanoi, and Their Implications for the Negotiating Situation

Two related strands of evidence have suddenly converged in the last three days, in a way that leads me to believe that Hanoi *may* be taking really serious stock of its negotiating situation.

The first is the recall of key North Vietnamese representatives overseas.² We learned last week from Pell that Mai Van Bo was going back on the 23rd for a month.³ On the 28th, we got word from Djakarta that the Ambassador there was being recalled, *and* that he had told the key Indonesians that this had to do with his recent conversations with them on negotiations.⁴ And today we learned, through the Norwegians, that the Ambassador in Peking went back in mid-June; he is both an Alternate Member of the Central Committee and the man who initiated a serious conversation with the Norwegian Ambassador on June 1.⁵ All three of these had thus engaged in serious discussions on negotiations just prior to their return.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Bundy Files: Lot 85 D 240, Top Secret WPB Chron., Jun/Aug 1967. Secret; Exdis.

² DRV Ambassadors and Chiefs of Mission to major countries, including those in the PRC, France, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Indonesia, and Burma (but excluding those in the Soviet Union, Algeria, and Egypt) were recalled at the end of June for a "conclave" in Hanoi in order to review diplomatic tactics and their government's negotiating position. The result appeared to be a less vitriolic and more flexible line, as witnessed by statements by DRV representatives in the conference's aftermath. (Memoranda from Hughes to Rusk, July 7, and from Holdridge to Bundy, July 20; both *ibid.*, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET)

³ See footnote 2, Document 214.

⁴ A June 29 INR briefing note sent to Hughes reported that DRV Ambassador Pham Binh was recalled to Hanoi for "consultations" that were "in connection" to an ongoing diplomatic overture in Indonesia. (Department of State, EA/ACA Files: Lot 69 D 277, Vietnam File—DRV) Indonesian intelligence officials previously met with Binh during unsuccessful exchanges in 1966 that were designed to mediate the war. On May 25, 1967, a new round of secret negotiations began. From the nature of Binh's statements and his responsiveness to Indonesia's role in attempting to arrange direct talks with the United States, Colonel Ali Murtopo, Director of External Intelligence, concluded that recent military pressure against the DRV was apparently effective. Further documentation on this initiative is in National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET.

⁵ See Document 201.

We have put out an inquiry to other key posts to learn if other North Vietnamese Ambassadors have left their posts. Moscow could be a real indicator, as the Ambassador there is another Alternate Member of the Central Committee.

Joined together with these signs is the recent uncertainty about Ho's whereabouts and health. Our last report of anyone seeing him personally is April 13th, and there has been one report that he was out of Hanoi and another that he was sick. The evidence on this is tenuous at best, since he often takes a summer vacation. But it does add parsley to the more solid evidence of the recall of the Ambassadors, that some real gathering may be taking place.

Secondly, the "nibble board" has been lighting up in the past month in several ways that are quite at variance with the totally negative readings of February through April, and that I would not have expected on a reading of the over-all situation in the South. Specifically,

a. Mai Van Bo has been seeing Americans much more frequently and seriously since late May. He has said nothing really new, but he went to great lengths to see Pell. Moreover, following the Baggs/Ashmore⁶ and Pell conversations, his press officer (in the past a notably accurate harbinger) has spoken to an American journalist to the effect that Bo clearly sees that the US is offering the possibility of "preliminary conversations" if there is to be an ultimate stopping of the bombing and serious "talks". This last is as of June 26. Going back to the Pell conversation, I have done a long memorandum this morning, which I attach.⁷ None of it is strictly new, but the tone and the absence of the stock line in some respects seems to me not without significance.

b. The Hanoi Ambassador in Indonesia at least made worried noises, although he refused any contact with an American.

c. The Hanoi Ambassador in Peking made his remarks to the Norwegian. Again nothing strictly new, but decidedly more flexible in tone.

Along with these have been the veiled but striking attack on Mao in a major Hanoi article, a relatively moderate Trinh interview of May 29 with the Japanese,⁸ and a report from Kissinger that the Czechs were claiming Hanoi did not necessarily reject reciprocity for the bombing stopping.⁹

⁶ See footnote 2, Document 214.

⁷ Bundy attached two memoranda of conversation with Pell, June 29. Neither is printed, but see footnote 2, Document 214.

⁸ In this interview, Trinh suggested that stopping the bombing and "other acts of war" on an unconditional basis could lead to a settlement. See *The New York Times*, June 3, 1967.

⁹ Telegram 1965 from Prague, May 16, contained Kissinger's report that Antonin Snejdarek, a Czech social scientist closely associated with the top echelons of his government, claimed that "Hanoi would be ready for arrangement whereby cessation of bombing could be linked with initiation of talks which could lead to a standstill cease-fire" that would include a halt to infiltration from the DRV. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S)

None of this gives any clear handle, and three North Vietnamese have again specifically refused official contact with us—Bo through Pell, the man in Indonesia, and the Chargé in Vientiane approached on our instructions by Sullivan. Nonetheless, my over-all feel is that something is at work. It may be just an attempt to make the bombing/talks gambit seem more appealing. It may be just tactics. But it just might be an indication of some serious re-thinking.

What to do

All this suggests that the present might be an excellent time for us to push some button or to have a third nation push it. Yet we ourselves apparently cannot make direct contact, and our best current indirect channels, notably the Norwegians in Peking, are out of action.

This brings me back to Paul Martin's proposal, as amended by your suggestion to him.¹⁰ In essence, that we could stop the bombing at least for a substantial period (through the wet season) if the Canadians could join with the other ICC members to put an effective force into the DMZ, and if Hanoi accepted this.

The present status is that this proposal has been submitted to the JCS for their over-all judgment and specifically for their view on the kind of force required to be "effective" in controlling the DMZ. JCS action was expected the end of this week, and I have checked without getting a clear picture. John McNaughton feels that the Chiefs may be strongly opposed, on the grounds that this is trading cessation of the bombing for at most a partial impairment of the infiltration routes. It is his further judgment that pressing the whole project to the point of Presidential decision would cause a major controversy.

This presents a fairly acute dilemma. The whole proposal has the virtue that it is a Canadian idea and could be put forward in its new form by the Canadians without requiring more from us than a general indication of approval.

But to get the Canadians to put it forward, in its new form, would almost certainly require not only (for our own protection) realistic discussion with them of the forces required—in the light of the JCS view—but at least an indication of receptivity. Paul Martin might well be unwilling to move without the latter, and indeed we ourselves would gain little in the eyes of the world or toward—the key question—putting Hanoi up to a significant policy choice, if we were not able to indicate general receptivity when the Canadians came up with it.

¹⁰ See footnote 2, Document 133.

In short, it is hard even to talk to the Canadians unless we have a top-level decision that we could tolerate their launching it and would be prepared to make a favorable noise. All of us think that Hanoi is unlikely to accept. But this new and reasonably dramatic proposal, plus our favorable reaction to it, could gain us a lot at the present time, and if there should be real ferment in Hanoi this could be an excellent way to probe it. Finally, the proposal may realistically be as good a trade for ending the bombing as we could ever see.

Alternatives

I see no really useful channel through which to poke Hanoi privately at the present moment. The Soviets surely would not be willing to play, probably even as a transmission belt for any new suggestion, and we have no good third-country channel with the Indonesian and Norwegian channels temporarily dead.

One possible channel might still be the Canadian ICC man, if the timing fits. He was received at high levels in April and might go back again. Perhaps Paul Martin would be willing to have him try the bombing/DMZ proposal on Hanoi in private without our committing ourselves to it, for this has less risks than the degree of commitment we would have to make to get Martin to say it publicly, while the objective of injecting something plausible into the North Vietnamese cogitations might thus be achieved.

Finally, there is the possibility of some public statement of our position on the bombing/talks problem that might appear more forthcoming. The requirement of reciprocal military action could be put in its most general and persuasive form along the lines that we required assurances that the other side would not take military advantage of any stopping of the bombing. And we could note that if we are to stop bombing and have discussions, the situation would be much eased if we had any conception of what Hanoi envisaged as an ultimate settlement. I think a probing speech could be written that would tease Hanoi in this direction without actually changing our substantive position.

Conclusion

I come to no ringing conclusion, as you can see, but it would help us to have your feeling on the DMZ/bombing gambit and any thoughts that may hit you on other approaches. I do think this is a rare occasion where we might hit the other side at a time when it could really have an effect.

228. Memorandum of Conversation Between the Ambassador at Large (Harriman) and Secretary of Defense McNamara¹

Washington, July 1, 1967, 2 p.m.

Bob McNamara said (1) it is impossible for us to win the war militarily; (2) that he hoped that the pressure on the President from the hawks wouldn't be so great that the war would be expanded into confrontation with the Soviet Union or China; (3) he felt that the most hopeful way of ending the war through negotiations would be for Saigon to negotiate with the NLF. He said that Dean Rusk had asked him to lay off this until after the Vietnamese election, but he thought that after the first of September we ought to come down with all our influence to force Saigon to begin to negotiate seriously with the NLF.

I said that it might be with the North Vietnamese or the NLF. He said he didn't care which, but he thought a solution would eventually require an agreement between the NLF and the Saigon Government.

He said Dean Rusk was much too optimistic over what could be achieved, much too rigid. He hoped that when negotiations started we could find some compromise. In his opinion, Rusk's objective could not be achieved. Some arrangement would have to be made between the Saigon Government and the NLF for a way in which they could live together.

I told him that I felt it was necessary to have Soviet participation in order to underwrite Hanoi financially to be able to accept the deal, since they might have to break with Peking. He said he would accept that, but didn't seem to understand its importance.

We did not discuss the Johnson/Kosygin conversations,² but I stated that I was convinced the Russians wanted a neutral Southeast Asia as a buffer to Chinese expansion, and if we would leave North Vietnam alone they would give us a free hand in South Vietnam under our 14 Points,³ but unfortunately the Soviet Union couldn't deliver Hanoi on such a sweeping agreement as that, but would try to be helpful if we stopped bombing the North. He said that the Saigon Government would have to come to some compromise with the NLF on how to live together.

¹ Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Harriman Papers, Special Files, Public Service, Subject File, McNamara, Robert S. Top Secret; Personal; For Personal Files Only. A cover page includes the typed phrase: "Literally Eyes Only for Governor Harriman."

² See Documents 216 and 217.

³ For a restatement of the Fourteen Points, the basis of the U.S. Government for a settlement of the war, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1967*, pp. 856–858.

I asked him if there was any use in my talking to Dean Rusk. He said he thought it might perhaps be better to wait a bit. Rusk didn't seem to understand that his position was asking for unconditional surrender of North Vietnam and the VC, but Bob didn't believe at the moment it was worth arguing with him. It might be better to wait a bit later, because he agreed we would be in a stronger position after the elections.

We discussed the elections, and I urged him to insist with Bunker that if these two military were elected President and Vice President, that a civilian Prime Minister with other civilians in important Ministries be installed. Without that, the Government would be considered in world opinion a continuation of the status quo, a stooge of the U.S. He appeared to agree with this, and thought that Bunker would be able to handle the situation. He showed confidence in Bunker's political judgments.

I mentioned the political problem the President would have if we didn't make some progress in negotiation within a year. He didn't seem to be as concerned as I am. I said the Democratic Party was split in a way I had never seen it. With that division, it was going to cause more trouble than now appears in the polls. Conservative Democrats have often said that the liberals have no place else to go. That isn't true. It has always been my opinion that the Democrats could only be elected with the vigorous support of the liberals, who are the ones who really go out and work and bring out the voters. If the liberals are disaffected, they sit on their hands. He commented that if the fighting was ended, the Republicans need not bother to run a candidate.

W. Averell Harriman⁴

⁴ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

229. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, July 1, 1967, 0911Z.

80. Ref Saigon 29258.²

1. I would like to make a number of preliminary comments regarding the situation which led to the decision to have a combined Thieu–Ky ticket and with respect to some of the points we should be considering for the future.

2. Although the final step was taken by Ky to find a solution to the growing division within the armed forces, a number of elements contributed to it. One of the most important was certainly the commitment made by both of them to President Johnson and continuing reminders of this to both Thieu and Ky by General Westmoreland and me. Other factors clearly related to domestic political pressures and the inter-play of various elements within the armed forces. Exactly how these factors played their parts is not yet clear but it is apparent that there was an overwhelming feeling within the military that unity had to be achieved. If this was to be done, the final gesture inevitably had to come from Ky in the face of Thieu's attitude and since the forces supporting Ky were apparently unable to bring about a more acceptable solution. Ky presumably saw the overriding sentiment for unity and thus the need for sacrifice by himself. The effect, at least initially, within the military is one of relief and happiness that this chapter at least is closed.

3. Looking back at the way this matter developed I am more than ever persuaded that our approach to the problem was the right one, i.e., to exert continuing but careful pressure on the principals, but to bring them in the end to work out their own solution. As I said in an earlier message, if we can do this it will be good for them and good for us. I think that this conclusion has been proven out and that we should maintain this general approach in the future. I am persuaded that the problems which will inevitably arise in future can be handled in the same way if there is mutual confidence in the objectives

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Priority; Exdis. Received at 6:28 a.m. and repeated to CINCPAC for POLAD. Passed to the White House at 6:45 a.m. Rostow sent the text of the telegram to the President at the LBJ Ranch in CAP 67628, July 1, where it was received at 11:12 a.m. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, CAP Cables) The notation "L" on the telegram indicates that the President saw it.

² Document 226.

we seek and patience regarding the way we try to achieve them on the spot.

4. As I have indicated, our initial soundings among the military on the morning-after indicate feelings of gratification and conviction that the unity that has been achieved must be continued in the difficult period ahead. The marrying of the elements supporting Thieu and Ky will be a difficult one but I believe it is by no means insufferable. There will be discontented elements, of course, and certain rumblings and unhappiness under the surface. Our objective with Thieu and Ky and their supporters will be to encourage them to work sincerely and honestly together for free and impartial elections. What they do to overcome the inevitably increased civilian fears of pressure and intimidation will be all the more important in this new situation. We will want to watch their moves closely in this connection and to continue quietly to encourage them to pursue a course that will meet our common goals.

5. The problem of giving the new ticket a solid civilian element as a basis for broad civilian-military cooperation after the elections will now be greater. The appointment of an able and popular civilian Prime Minister, or an arrangement for eventual cooperation with one of the leading civilian tickets in forming a government, will be all the more important. A publicly professed willingness to collaborate with the civilian elements and candidates in both the executive and the legislative branches would be a constructive step. We will seek to encourage them to pursue this general line and we will try to create a receptive attitude on the part of the civilian Presidential candidates and the members of the tickets for the Senate.

6. Our initial impression of reactions from the camps of the civilian candidates is one of surprise and confusion and certain premonitions as to the difficulties which face them. They had come to expect a divided military camp and now are faced with the probability of a unified military with all the advantages of incumbency. Once the initial confusion is over on the civilian side, we would imagine that there will be a greater tendency for the principal candidates to try to develop a more effective combination to compete with the Thieu–Ky ticket. We know there have already been soundings between the Suu–Dan and the Huong–Truyen slates and Ha Thuc Ky, possibly with the latter as Prime Minister. There may also be increasing flirtation between the leading civilian contenders and the military ticket, looking to future collaboration. On the other hand, there may also be a greater tendency to look for an excuse to call foul in connection with the conduct of the elections, as a basis for ultimate withdrawal.

7. We will be following all of these developments as closely as possible. I think it is important for us to give this situation time to set-

tle down and not to press in prematurely on specific propositions. I believe we have a common understanding between us as to our general objectives in the period ahead and we will do our best to achieve them and to keep you informed regarding developments.

Bunker

230. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, July 1, 1967, 1110Z.

52. Ref Saigon 29258.²

1. I called on General Thieu at noon July 1 and spent about one hour with him. Thieu was in a relaxed and cheerful mood. I expressed my satisfaction that a decision had been reached on one military slate.

2. Thieu recounted the events that led up to the June 30 decision, repeating much of what Ky had said to me the day before.³ Thieu said that the talks among the Generals had been extremely frank. He had told them that some of the Generals had not given him sufficient consideration and had hurt his feelings deeply. Thieu said that he had finally informed the other Generals that he proposed to resign from the army and run as a civilian candidate, but this had brought a strong negative reaction on the grounds it would divide the military seriously. Thieu replied to them that he had not been the one who had divided the armed forces and that it was the actions of others among them that had led to this situation. He said that he had mentioned General Loan and General Nguyen Bao Tri specifically.

3. Following these discussions, according to Thieu, the Generals had insisted that he must remain in the armed forces. Thieu said that he would agree to do so only on the following conditions: (1) that the

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Priority; Exdis. Received at 7:28 a.m. and repeated to CINCPAC for POLAD. Passed to the White House at 8:26 a.m. Rostow sent the text of the telegram to the President at the LBJ Ranch in telegram CAP 67627, July 1, where it was received at 9:37 a.m. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, CAP Cables) The notation "L" on the telegram indicates that the President saw it.

² Document 226.

³ Reported in Document 226.

solidarity of the armed forces would be maintained and (2) that the elections would be completely free and fair. He had then declared that it was not important whether the military candidate or a civilian candidate was elected provided it was a free election. Otherwise it would be impossible to unify the people. Thieu repeated this point several times to me and said that he had spoken to the province chiefs in the same sense.

4. I emphasized to Thieu that if the Thieu–Ky ticket were elected, it would be important to broaden the government and to have a substantial civilian element in it. Thieu said he entirely agreed. He believed that there should be a civilian Prime Minister and most of the Cabinet posts should be filled by good civilians. He thought only the Defense, Revolutionary Development, and perhaps Information/Chieu Hoi portfolios need be military.

5. Thieu also stressed the importance of an increased pacification effort. He thought that division commanders should play much more active roles and province and district chief staffs should be enlarged in order for them to cope with this priority problem satisfactorily.⁴

Bunker

⁴ In a July 2 memorandum to Westmoreland commenting on telegram 52, Komer argued that simply encouraging division commanders to play a greater role in pacification would not “give pacification a push.” He suggested that Thang be made Deputy Prime Minister in charge of all ministries relating to pacification as well as province and district chiefs. (Center for Military History, DepCORDS/MACV Files, Project TAKEOFF: 1967–68)

231. Memorandum From the Secretary of the Air Force (Brown) to Secretary of Defense McNamara¹

Washington, July 3, 1967.

This memo represents some further thoughts on possible courses of action in the air war in North Vietnam.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Papers of Paul C. Warnke, McNaughton Files, McNTN XIII, Memoranda 1967 (3). Top Secret.

All proposals² should be judged against the following standards: (a) the military effect on North Vietnamese infiltration of men and supplies of the VC/NVA forces in the South; (b) the collateral support of US/ARVN/FWF in SVN, including the morale of those forces; (c) the political effects, to include such factors as the influence upon the will of the North Vietnamese and the South Vietnamese, the chances for negotiation on reasonable terms, the reaction to de-escalation or escalation by China and the USSR, and the effects on our Allies and domestic opinion; and (d) the expected US air losses.

The evaluation of various proposals against these standards requires us to be more specific with respect to the detailed nature of the proposed campaigns, the results of past efforts, and the estimated effects of proposed alternative actions. I have therefore compared "my" Alternative C with Alternative B relative to distribution of weights of effort and some of the expected results.

Both alternatives concentrate most of the sorties in NVN in the area south of 20° and continue attacks north of 20° to deny reconstitution of important fixed targets and maintain pressure against the northern LOCs. The primary difference is in relative weights of effort. Alternative C proposes 20% of attack sortie effort north of 20°, whereas Alternative B proposes to accomplish its stated objectives with "occasional sorties (perhaps 3%)" in the North.

The following table contains a direct comparison between the specific objectives of the two alternatives.

COMPARISON OF OBJECTIVES

<i>Item</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>
1. Concentrate primary effort south of 20°	Yes	Yes
2. Deny reconstitution of important fixed targets	Yes	Yes
3. Prevent men and matériel from flowing from NVN to SVN	Yes	Yes
4. Impede matériel from flowing into NVN	No	Yes

² Reference is to the three alternatives outlined in the attachment to Document 194.

5. Attack LOC targets in Red River delta to keep enemy defenses and damage repair crews there	Yes	Yes
6. Weight of effort programmed north of 20° (percentage of total effort and number of sorties given in terms of past average monthly effort and maximum authorized under Rolling Thunder program). <i>Note:</i> Average monthly effort is 8700 sorties in NVN (June 1966 to May 1967).	3% or 261-435 sorties	20% or 1740-2900 sorties
Add non-attack combat sorties north of 20°	900	2000

[Here follows Brown's analysis of the impact of the effort in four different areas of Alternative B (emphasis on bombing south of the 20th parallel) and Alternative C (the continuation of the current bombing program). The first was the military effect, for which he argued that Alternative C would provide the best means for reducing infiltration southward. Next, concerning collateral support, he concluded that Alternative C would stiffen the ARVN by continuing to inflict significant damage upon the enemy. Third, in terms of political impact, Brown noted that the partial reduction in the scope of the bombing might prove ineffective in encouraging the North Vietnamese toward de-escalation, and resuming a full schedule of bombing would be difficult after a partial halt. Last, any residual decrease in loss of aircraft with the restriction of bombing to below the 29th parallel would erode when the North Vietnamese re-directed their air defense systems to that area.]

Conclusion:

Based upon the military and political considerations above, including the effects on US air losses, I continue to recommend Alternative C.

Harold Brown

232. Memorandum From the Ambassador's Special Assistant (Lansdale) to the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker)¹

Saigon, July 7, 1967.

SUBJECT

Talk with Thang, July 6

I saw General Nguyen duc Thang the afternoon of July 6, largely at the request of Arch Calhoun who was compiling some information from Mission sources. Here are highlights of our talk:

Agreement. I probed for details of any agreement between Chief of State Thieu and Prime Minister Ky on how much authority Ky would have as Vice President, over the Cabinet and RVNAF. Thang said that there is only a vague understanding, to the best of his knowledge, and feels that Ky is uneasy about the vagueness. Thang recalls that, when this subject came up during the final hours of deciding the Thieu–Ky coalition, Thieu indicated that Ky would have a large say in Cabinet and RVNAF appointments “because we are brothers in the family.” Thang knew of no further clarification. He guessed that there hadn’t been any, since Ky and the four Corps Commanders, who were meeting with Thieu the afternoon of July 6, had implied in their talk at the Palace earlier in the day that Thieu owed them a debt. (I gave this information orally to Arch Calhoun.)

Disfavor. Thang commented that General Thieu could be expected to harbor a grudge against three individuals for a long time. Thieu will be unable to forgive General Loan for what he believes were threats against his life, General Tri for the way he belittled Thieu on radio and TV, and General Thang for what he believes were acts that made Thieu lose prestige in the Army (telling Thieu that the Generals wouldn’t back him against Ky, and Thang’s statements during the confrontation).

Proposal. Thang said that Prime Minister Ky had talked to him the morning of July 6 about staying on in the Army, rather than retiring at the end of the year. Ky asked Thang to consider taking over the Political Warfare Directorate, after the September elections.² Thang asked

¹ Source: Center for Military History, DepCORDS/MACV Files, Lansdale (1967–1968). Secret; Sensitive. Copies were sent to Locke, Westmoreland, Komer, Calhoun, Hart, and Jacobson.

² In telegram 347 from Saigon, July 5, Bunker reported that Thang had attacked Thieu for his “trickiness and indecisiveness” at the June 29–30 meeting of ARVN Generals. Bunker also reported that Ky suggested to Thang that he become Chief of the JGS if Vien became Minister of Defense. National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S)

me what I thought of this idea. I replied that Thang already knew that I believed he must continue serving his country and should not retire. As for the Polwar Directorate, it was a nice but ineffective spot for a real leader, which I believe Thang to be—unless given some disciplinary authority. His opposite number, on the enemy side, would have equal authority with combat commanders, with a parallel chain-of-command, and participate in top policy decisions—and it would be unrealistic to expect to match his effectiveness with something not designed to match it. I expressed a personal opinion that Thang should be given a command position, where he could exercise leadership to help his country, if he returns to the Army.

Ministry. I pushed Thang again about considering staying on in the Ministry. He refused to budge from his decision to leave when an elected Constitutional Government takes office, although he admitted that he has no real thoughts yet on who might replace him and keep the fine work going after he has left. However, he reaffirmed his pledge to me that he would keep working hard at his Ministry tasks until the end.

233. Editorial Note

Secretary of Defense McNamara, along with Under Secretary of State Katzenbach and JCS Chairman General Wheeler, visited Vietnam July 7–11, 1967, at the request of the President to work out the Program V force package. The first briefing that the delegation received after arriving in Saigon was by Ambassador Bunker, followed in succession by General Westmoreland and his aides. For the record of these meetings, see U.S. House of Representatives, Armed Services Committee, *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 5, pages 192–209. For McNamara's reaction to the briefings, see his autobiographical account entitled *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (New York: Times Books, 1995), page 283. The authors of the *Pentagon Papers* described the meetings as follows:

"The sum total of the briefings did not vary from what McNamara had heard so many times before: that there was an increasing NVA presence in control of the war; that it was increasingly becoming a main force battle; that the sanctuaries were becoming increasingly important to the enemy both for the logistics and the tactical advantages they offered. It was clear that MACV's view of the war in these terms, as increasingly a main force battle to be fought by American units, had considerable influence by the strategies that they pursued, as well as in

their calculations of resources required to carry them out." (*The Pentagon Papers*, The Senator Gravel Edition, pages 522–523)

During the visit McNamara, relying on a July 5 study by Assistant Secretary of Defense for System Analysis Alain Enthoven, which concluded that the army could provide only $3\frac{2}{3}$ division equivalents, held the line on force increases. He compelled MACV to accept a general agreement-in-principle on additional deployments to Vietnam which would not exceed an overall ceiling of 525,000 men. (*Ibid.*, pages 515–523)

234. Telegram From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson in Texas¹

Washington, July 9, 1967, 1605Z.

CAP 67721. Herewith Bob Komer's personal Viet-Nam assessment, as requested.

Fm Amb Komer 164.

To the White House eyes only the President.

1. Herewith personal estimate VN situation you requested.² Am returning with McNamara for short consultation and will fill in orally if you desire.

2. No matter how many call me rosy optimist, I feel more confident than ever that at long last we are slowly but surely winning war of attrition in South. After fifteen months full-time on VN, including two months out here, I will stick to my guns despite more sceptical views SecDef and others who not as intimately familiar with myriad day-to-day details which add up to what really happening in VN. Moreover, after ten years as national estimator synthesizing all facets of various situations I have some experience at this business, as Walt Rostow can attest.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Walt Rostow, Komer-Locke on Vietnam. Secret; Literally Eyes Only for the President. Received at the LBJ Ranch at 4:54 p.m.

² The President requested a similar report from Locke on the situation in Vietnam in telegram CAP 67697 from Saigon, July 7. (*Ibid.*) Locke's report, which echoed points put forth earlier by Bunker in his weekly summaries, was sent as CIA 9145, July 11. (*Ibid.*) Rostow summarized the recommendations of both men in lists which he sent to the President on July 12. (*Ibid.*)

3. While other top brass here less willing go out on estimative limb than I, universal tenor of briefs to SecDef party one of sober optimism—even on electoral prospects. Westy clearly thinks we are winning military war. His real pitch is that the more you give him the faster he can reinforce success.

4. Regrettably our military have been their own worst enemies by succumbing in past to tendency build up enemy in order justify more troops. This has so added to press scepticism that when Westy told press two weeks ago that enemy losses probably exceeded crossover point in March and again in May, they wouldn't even print it.

5. Our own outdated figures are what convince press of stalemate. For example, no qualified observer—military or civilian—still holds to early 1966 vintage estimate that VC in-country recruiting averages 7000 per month. The new J-2's best guess is 3500, which would mean that with mounting losses we've inflicted on enemy in 1967 crossover point was reached some time ago. Yet until J-2 completes major study validating new figure,³ all official estimates are still based on old figure—thus daily widening credibility gap.

6. All here agree that VC visibly declining. This is becoming more and more of an NVA war. Main force war and even pacification going much better in II–IV Corps. But high level of conventional operations against NVA in I Corps obscures this picture of growing success in rest of country.

7. Now for NVA infiltration. Even if it remains as high as 6300 monthly average now estimated during 1966 there must be some reason why Hanoi doesn't put in even more in order prevent constant defeats it suffering. Answer probably lies in several factors which prevent Hanoi from supporting any larger force in South. One of these is undoubtedly our bombing of North. SecDef keeps pointing out that bombing hasn't stopped infiltration. But it equally valid to say that bombing plus logistic difficulties do in fact place some kind of ceiling on Hanoi's ability infiltrate South. Thus if we can keep grinding down VC/NVA, while preventing Hanoi from further buildup in SVN, Hanoi will be increasingly behind eight ball.

8. This factor, plus impressive air briefings for McNamara on sharply higher pain level we inflicting on NVN during last few months good weather, suggests that continued bombing of North desirable complement to military effort in South.

9. Another major change in situation is that our cutting off of seaborne coastal infiltration routes has forced Hanoi rely on much more difficult Laos-Cambodian corridor. Thus Bunker, Westy, and I see

³ See Document 397.

strong case for raids against Laos routes. It could reduce need for more US troops. We not talking here about seizing ground or employing US forces. Combination of continued bombing, the new barrier, and raids into Laos offers real hope of limiting NVA infiltration, thus complementing our growing attrition of southern VC.

10. Though McNamara still sceptical on pacification, I feel in much better position than he to see that we finally making some progress, with every prospect doing better given sizable and growing investment we at long last putting into it. True, countryside still insecure and infrastructure/guerillas still everywhere. But no one who sees as much as I do would deny that we doing much better than last year.

11. Biggest worry out here (and I won't downplay it) is that election will go sour. Thieu/Ky are running scared—because of Big Minh as much as civilians—which increases risk they'll rig elections. We can't live with a sham election, partly because resulting regime would simply be so lacking in popular support that it would be under constant pressure. Hence we must weigh in heavily (and publicly as means of pressuring Ky/Thieu) for reasonably fair election. If a civilian wins, I think we could live with him—and surely prevent military coup. Whatever happens, new regime will probably be even less effective than present one, largely because new Senate/Assembly will play independent role.

12. Provided we can make sure elections not a sham, and can sustain present military pressure, enemy summer/fall offensive will prove even more a fizzle than last year. This could lead Hanoi to rethink whether it can really afford to wait us out through 1968 elections. Even if it decides to outwait us, I am convinced that by mid-1968 we will be so visibly winning that even press here won't be able to deny it. Therefore I recommend:

A. Keep bombing North through remaining few months of good weather. Hold off pause or cutback to 20 degrees until fall, when onset monsoon will force some diminution anyway. I fear military would scream publicly if we cut back just when they claim they're finally getting results.

B. Allow up to brigade size ARVN raids into Laos as added means getting at infiltration routes.

C. Whatever added US forces you decide to give Westy, put positive public face on it. Also get him to say it's enough for now by promising to let him reargue case later if necessary.

D. Keep heat on to revamp ARVN. Westy has made real progress, but a lot more is possible and will reduce US troop needs.

E. Tell us in spades we'd better make sure elections clean. Add your own oral message to Thieu/Ky. If you authorize in time, McNamara could tell him Tuesday.

13. Above hasty thumbnail sketch adds up to my judgment that, wasteful and painful though it is, our massive investment out here is

finally beginning to pay off. Will gladly elaborate at length in person but hope you will protect my candor.

235. Telegram From the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker) to Secretary of State Rusk¹

Saigon, July 11, 1967.

CAS 9117. "For the Secretary of State from Ambassador Bunker.

"1. I have carefully examined the implications of recent political developments here culminating in the filing of the Thieu/Ky Presidential slate and their consequences in terms of U.S. interests. The Thieu/Ky alliance, however shotgun, removed the threat of a ranorous political fight within the military establishment during the election campaign, and this, in the long run, should prove a substantial net gain. Both men appear able and willing to keep their respective military supporters in line and handle the residual restiveness in both camps. It is unfortunate that the ticket lacks the civilian element we had hoped the military slate would have and we recognize that, if the Thieu/Ky slate wins, the charge will inevitably be made that the election process has done little but formalize present arrangements. Nonetheless, in the likely event that Thieu and Ky do win, the need for serious and significant civilian participation can be met through inclusion of civilian elements in the campaign, in the new government, and through the development of organized civilian support which can evolve in the direction of a broadly-based national party.

"2. It seems to me that a Thieu/Ky victory is probable and, more important, that it can be achieved in a reasonably honest manner in an honest electoral contest. Furthermore, in light of political realities here, I believe an honest victory by the Thieu/Ky slate would be in our national interests and would facilitate the effective prosecution of the many difficult tasks which we and the GVN face in a variety of spheres. The problem is to keep the election honest and to keep the military slate's campaign moving in acceptable fashion in the proper directions.

"3. All factors considered, I feel the best way to address this problem is to have [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] embark on

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Sensitive; Nodis. This telegram was passed to Read under cover of a July 11 memorandum by George W. Allen, Vietnamese Affairs Staff, CIA, who noted that it was received at 5:45 a.m. (Ibid.)

a modest [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] political action and advisory effort with General Ky. Thieu [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*]² has informed Ky that he (Thieu) has neither a campaign organization nor plans for an election platform and said that he will rely on Ky to take the initiative in these matters. At their 10 July meeting, Ky informed his [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] contact that he was undecided whether to take the initiative in waging the campaign, or sit on his hands and allow the ticket to be defeated. I believe we should encourage Ky to act, but guide his actions and influence their directions in the manner outlined below. Using the [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] channel, I am passing word to Ky encouraging him to campaign energetically. In addition, within the framework of the Department's message of 30 June via CAS,³ I am authorizing [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] to proceed with a modest [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] program as outlined below.

"4. A [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] channel for a continuing exchange of views with Ky (and hence a secure means of getting our advice to him) has been established. Ky has selected as his representative an individual whom he trusts implicitly, [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*], whose contact role will not be known to other members of Ky's entourage, and whose past experience does not include undue association with Americans. I am satisfied that this channel can be kept [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] and that the risk of using it is acceptable. I plan to use it for the following purposes:

"A. To provide us with a comprehensive view of the GVN's campaign strategy and tactics and a means of influencing them.

"B. To monitor the evolution of the Ky/Thieu relationship. The last-minute creation of their joint ticket under stress-filled conditions has obviously made for an uneasy balance between these two rivals. Through the [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] channel (and other [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] assets), we should receive early warnings of any serious rift developing between Ky and Thieu that could affect their continued candidacy or the election process itself.

"C. Through this channel, we can exert continuing pressure to insure that the military slate does not employ politically counterproductive campaign tactics, and that the government keeps its promise of affording equal transportation, communication, and other support services to the civilian candidates. Any abuses of military, police, or

² Not found.

³ Document 224.

bureaucratic elements in the furtherance of the Thieu/Ky ticket can be brought immediately and forcefully to Ky's attention for immediate action.

"D. A properly-drafted platform for the campaign can go far beyond the simple and immediate objectives of voter appeal. Using this channel to provide platform guidance and advice will enable us to shape the position taken on questions of domestic and international importance (e.g., national reconciliation) and keep the military slate moving toward the democratic objectives we would want to see realized in Vietnam.

"E. In recent months, Ky and his immediate circle of Vietnamese advisors have laid the groundwork for an alliance composed of various Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, and VNQDD segments. This alliance has the potential for becoming a civilian group taking an active role in the campaign and attenuating the image of the Thieu/Ky slate as a military monolith. After the election, this group could conceivably evolve into the kind of genuine, broad political party Vietnam urgently needs. This [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] channel could be used to monitor and guide the development of this organization in ways that will civilianize a Thieu/Ky government and facilitate the creation of a true political party.

"4. The above program is one of guidance and advice in return for information and influence. I am not proposing that we support Ky's campaign in any substantial material way, although by separate message I shall request modest financial support for the rather hopeful effort described in paragraph 3E above. In addition I believe it will be desirable, quite independently of this effort with Ky, to give a limited degree of financial support to certain candidates for the new Vietnamese legislature, and will cover these in the separate message also.⁴ I believe that the program we are undertaking with Ky, supplemented by modest [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] support to some worthwhile parliamentary candidates, will help us along the road to healthy democratic government in South Vietnam."

⁴ Not further identified.

236. Memorandum for Record¹

Saigon, July 11, 1967, 11:05 a.m.

1. At 1105 hours on 11 July 1967, Secretary McNamara, Secretary Katzenbach, Ambassador Bunker, General Abrams and I met with Chief of State Thieu, Premier Ky, General Vien, Ambassador Bui Diem and Foreign Minister Do in the Presidential Palace. Secretary McNamara led off by expressing greetings from President Johnson and his pleasure at the actions taken to maintain unity among Vietnamese military leaders at this time of upcoming elections. He went on to say that we must create and maintain an environment for free and honest elections. President Johnson wished him to express his strong support for the GVN and the war effort; however, there must be unity of effort and it must be made clear to the world that the elections are free and honest.² General Thieu responded that they on their side appreciated the opportunity for frank discussions. The GVN seeks better ways to work together. He added that they would like to know what subjects our party wished to discuss.

2. Secretary McNamara stated that the upcoming elections were really the most important subject before us. He called on Secretary Katzenbach to comment and the latter stated that US attitudes and support will be influenced by news media reports concerning the elections. If the reports are favorable, the burden on President Johnson will be lightened. Therefore, it is most important that the elections be honest. Thieu answered that they could assure us as to the unity of the Vietnamese forces. He and Ky are now joined together on one ticket as a symbol of the unity of the VNAF, even though two military men on the same ticket is not politically the wisest course of action. Indeed, the fact that they are on the same slate makes them (Thieu and Ky) even more anxious than before to have free and honest elections.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Bundy Files: Lot 85 D 240, Kissinger—1967. Secret. Prepared by General Wheeler on July 13 in Washington on letterhead of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In Wheeler's covering memorandum to Bundy, July 14, he wrote in part: "The interesting thing, in my judgment, was that neither Thieu nor Ky appeared to be particularly interested in the out of country bombing campaign."

² In telegram CAP 67727 to McNamara, the President wrote: "If you and Nick concur, I would like you to see Ky and Thieu, either separately or together—as you and Ambassador Bunker may judge wise—and tell them in my name: (1) I am glad that they have honored their commitment volunteered to me at Guam for the military to stay together in the election process and I count on them continuing; and (2) It is absolutely essential to my ability to continue to back the struggle for South Vietnamese independence and self determination that the election be conducted with complete honesty and fairness, and that this honesty and fairness be apparent to all. Since I have always dealt with them together, I think it would be good if this message were delivered to them together. But I leave that decision in your hands." (Washington National Records Center, RG 330, McNamara Vietnam Files: FRC 77-0075, Vietnam—(July and August 1967))

3. Secretary McNamara expressed his satisfaction with Thieu's response and stated that he would so report to the President. He then referred to recent statements by Thieu and Ky relative to negotiations with Hanoi and/or the NLF. He posed the following question: Are you receptive to peace talks after the elections? Thieu replied that the GVN has good will. After the elections they will be in a stronger position to talk; however, much will depend on the attitudes of Hanoi.

4. Mr. McNamara then raised the requirement to make more effective use of Vietnamese forces. On the GVN side, they must improve the Regional Forces and the Popular Forces and leadership over-all. He understood that the GVN is considering expanding their forces. This would be done, he had been told, by expanding the draft and lowering the draft age. They should understand that President Johnson has difficult problems arising from increasing US forces in Vietnam unless and until full use is made of the VNAF and its effectiveness is maximized. General Vien referred Mr. McNamara to the COMUSMACV briefings on programs to improve leadership. He stated that he had asked General Westmoreland for more advisors for Regional and Popular Forces. He believes that in some cases Province Chiefs have misused Regional and Popular Forces. In any event, he thought that with more US advisors and with implementation of current programs, the situation would be improved.

5. At Mr. McNamara's request to Ambassador Bunker concerning any other problems being raised, the Ambassador suggested discussing the exchange rates. Mr. McNamara then stated that he had great difficulty justifying to the US Congress the official exchange rate of 80 piasters to the dollar when individuals can obtain 118 piasters for a dollar. This problem is, of course, complex and he did not suggest that they discuss it at this time. However, he requested that the GVN study the problem of equalizing exchange rates in the near future.³

6. A part of the discussion having been about increasing the effectiveness of the VNAF, when I was asked for my comments, I stated that VNAF troop units generally are under strength. I suggested that the quickest and most effective way of increasing the combat capability of the VNAF would be to keep troop units up to strength. General Vien replied that he is trying to do this, but was having problems related to the output of training camps and the casualty rate. General Vien then raised as a problem the adverse effect of the use of Cambodian territory as a sanctuary by the NVA and the Viet Cong forces. He stated that it is well known that the North Vietnamese Army units in II Corps are being supplied with food and ammunition from Cambo-

³ See Document 114.

dia. In his judgment, we must take action against these enemy forces. (There was no comment from the American side.)

7. Thieu asked if there are any signs that Hanoi wants to negotiate after the elections. Secretary McNamara responded that he really didn't know. He pointed out, however, that a number of North Vietnamese Ambassadors have been recently recalled to Hanoi. He conjectured that they would discuss with Hanoi leaders military and political futures. He asked Thieu if the Vietnamese had any information on this subject. Thieu responded simply "no."

8. Thieu then asked if it were true that the main military targets in North Vietnam had been destroyed.⁴ Secretary McNamara stated that the war effort is supported from out of country; therefore, our bombing campaign has not been able to do other than reduce and obstruct the movement of war supporting matériel in North Vietnam. Nevertheless, this was not to say that the destruction of targets in North Vietnam has not hurt the North Vietnamese. About 80% of air effort has been directed at lines of communication. We estimate that some 500,000 men have been diverted to the maintenance of LOC's, air defense, etc. This is a very heavy price for a country such as North Vietnam to pay. Secretary Katzenbach intervened to say that North Vietnam is, in his judgment, making more mistakes recently than before. He considers that this is an encouraging factor.

9. Thieu then asked if there had been indications at Glassboro that Kosygin would be helpful in seeking an end to the war. Mr. McNamara responded that Kosygin had come to the US to salvage Soviet face as a result of the debacle in the Middle East; he was in no mood to agree to put pressure on Hanoi leaders; however, President Johnson had been able to put across to Kosygin that the US is committed to the freedom of South Vietnam. Of course, US objectives are, in fact, limited, but we intend to reach those objectives; namely, a situation such that the South Vietnamese can choose their own way of life.

10. The conference adjourned at 1200 hours for lunch.

Earle G. Wheeler
Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff

⁴ This was really a double-barreled question, the other part being whether or not we would undertake a bombing pause (main targets having been destroyed) to induce negotiations. McN responded to this in low key, saying that we would not want to stop the air campaign in such a way as to get ourselves into a Korean-type [following words illegible]. [Handwritten footnote in the source text by Wheeler.]

237. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, July 12, 1967, 1101Z.

893. For the President from Bunker. Herewith my eleventh weekly telegram.

A. General.

1. Secretary McNamara, Under Secretary Katzenbach, and their colleagues left yesterday afternoon after a five-day visit which included an intensive series of briefings and field trips. For me and my colleagues here, both civilian and military, this has proved to be an extremely useful exercise. It gave us an opportunity to review our objectives, to appraise what progress we may have made, where we have gone wrong, and to come up with definite proposals for future action and for accelerating the pace of progress here. It has been valuable to us also in providing a more intimate view of the Washington picture, and the problems you are facing there, for through contacts of this kind one can get a feel for the situation which telegraphic communications do not convey. Finally, meetings such as this help us to crystallize our thinking and force us to come to definite conclusions as to what new and definite steps we should undertake to get on with the job.

2. As a result of the meetings, I believe that Bob McNamara, Nick Katzenbach, and my senior colleagues and I have come to a meeting of the minds on how we ought to proceed in reinforcing the success we have already had here. They will be reporting to you, of course, in detail on the meetings and of our conclusions. I will therefore only summarize here what I believe are some of the more salient points:²

A. That we should provide General Westmoreland with the number of maneuver battalions available without calling up the Reserves. Bob McNamara has indicated that he could provide up to 21 battalions.

B. Maintain our bombing of North Viet-Nam through the remaining months of good weather. We can then decide whether to cut back to the 20th parallel and whether we then think a pause to test out

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Priority; Nodis. Received at 10:35 a.m. The notation “L” on a covering note from Rostow to the President, July 12, 7:45 p.m., indicates that the President saw the telegram. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 8B(1)[A], Bunker’s Weekly Report to the President) This telegram is printed in full in Pike, *The Bunker Papers*, pp. 78–85.

² According to a notation on the telegram, paragraphs A and B were deleted from all copies except those sent to the White House, the Under Secretary, and the Secretary of Defense.

Hanoi's intentions would be advisable. The onset of unfavorable weather would provide the basis for a rationale for a decision on these points.

C. That we should intensify our efforts at interdiction of infiltration by the enemy in Laos through application of the measures envisaged in Illinois City and Compatriot. We should also allow brigade size ARVN raids into Laos. As I have mentioned in previous messages, I realize the political sensitivity of operations in Laos but I also feel that if necessary we should go beyond these proposed steps to choke off enemy infiltration, for I believe this is the crux of the military problem here. Since I have covered this in some detail in previous messages I will not repeat here the suggestion I have already made.

D. Continuing efforts to improve the ARVN/RF/PF. General Westmoreland has already an intensive program underway which I have previously reported in some detail. Considerable improvement in performance is already evident but much remains to be done, especially with the RF/PF forces; and also with ARVN's role in pacification. Secretary McNamara brought up the matter in our talks with Chairman Thieu, Prime Minister Ky and General Vien yesterday. They recognized the need for improvement. Ky said that the RF/PF especially needed better leadership and better living conditions to improve morale. The military and the civil service have been the chief sufferers from inflation while laborers and farmers have to a degree benefitted from full employment, increased pay and prices for farm products.

E. The maximum use of manpower and its more effective utilization. We are agreed that after the elections mobilization will be necessary. As I have mentioned previously, Ambassador Locke has this whole problem under intensive study. Secretary McNamara made it clear in our talks yesterday with Thieu and Ky that maximum use of RVN manpower and its more effective utilization was a prerequisite to the deployment of greater U.S. or free world forces.

F. Speeding up of pacification. Bob Komer will be reporting to you in detail on what is being done here. Although progress to date may have seemed rather slow, I am frankly encouraged, not only by the progress already made, but by the improved prospects which our own reorganization of our advisory and supporting role promise. Through it I am confident that we shall be able to bring greater emphasis and leverage to bear on the Vietnamese role, for no matter how efficient the organization of our role may be, unless the Vietnamese carry the main burden, the program cannot succeed. As Ky said in our talks yesterday, pacification really means nation-building and this is a big job, especially in wartime. But he also expressed confidence that their part in it would become increasingly effective. In this connection, it is encouraging that he mentioned a fact on which Gene Locke, Bob Komer

and I are all agreed, that the Province Chief is a vitally important element in the process. He expressed dissatisfaction with the present quality of incumbents and is planning on setting up a training center for Province Chiefs and replacement of those who are unsatisfactory. He also expressed the view that Province Chiefs should have control of the ARVN/RF/PF forces assigned to pacification and should also have direct access to the central government instead of having to go through the Division and Corps Commanders as at present. We here are all in agreement on this also. General Thieu expressed a differing view, feeling that the Division Commander should have more responsibility for pacification.

G. The necessity that elections should be fair and honest. Secretary McNamara expressed very clearly and explicitly the importance you attach to the holding of fair and honest elections. He emphasized strongly the fact that unless the elections were free and fair public opinion in the U.S. undoubtedly will be adversely affected and this in turn would affect the support which the Vietnamese are receiving from the U.S. and other free world countries. As you know, I also have repeatedly stressed these points to Thieu and Ky. I hope and believe that this repeated emphasis is having some effect, but as I mentioned in last week's message³ the unfolding electoral process will have to have our close attention until the elections are concluded. One good sign is the general feeling that censorship, police harassment, and the pressures on the civil service to support the military candidate are greatly reduced. There is also general relief that the military have closed ranks and can now concentrate on fighting the Viet Cong instead of one another.

H. Economic stability and measures to restrain inflation. We are agreed on the need for a study of means for preventing an unacceptable degree of inflation while permitting an increase in military manpower and the initiation of other priority measures.

3. Some other points which came out of our meetings with Thieu, Ky and General Vien yesterday were:

A. On ARVN/RF/PF: Ky and General Vien advocated an increase in force levels of 65,000, lowering the draft age to 18 and extending the length of service. Discharges have been stopped. This will mean that 40,000 men who would have been otherwise eligible to discharge will be retained. This has been done administratively on the basis that additional forces will be needed to provide protection during the electoral process.

B. Ky and Vien believe that the Communists may try for one big victory before elections, that they will increase attacks on the pacifica-

³ See footnote 2, Document 232.

tion program, and attempt to disrupt the elections at the village and hamlet level.

C. They believe that the first three months of the new government will be a testing time for the new regime. During this period the Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Army will continue an intensified series of attacks but it will also be an opportunity to strengthen the government in South Vietnam by broadening its base, and an opportunity to convince the Viet Cong that a military victory is impossible.

D. On the question of negotiations, Ky emphasized the fact that the Government of Vietnam was willing to talk to Hanoi at any time but that an elected government would be in a stronger position to do so. This should be done at the "proper time" with adequate preparation. Ky mentioned the fact that two years ago the Government of Vietnam was "talking about going North," a year ago about two Vietnams, and now could talk about how to end the war. Thieu asked whether Secretary McNamara had information as to whether the main military targets in North Vietnam had been destroyed and if therefore a cessation of bombing would be an inducement to negotiations. The Secretary pointed out that we did not yet have enough information on this score and that except for manpower the North Vietnamese war-making potential was really not located in North Vietnam, but came from outside sources. He mentioned the fact that one thing we would not want to do is to get into Korean-type negotiations which continued for two years during which hostilities also continued. He pointed out that our losses were heavier during the negotiating period than preceding it.

4. Ambassador Locke will have reported to you in very considerable detail on plans and programs underway and contemplated in the military, manpower, pacification, economic and political areas. I concur in his observations and recommendations. I may add that all of us here—Gene Locke, Westy, Bob Komer, and I, together with our senior advisors, General Abrams, Don MacDonald, Barry Zorthian, John Hart and Arch Calhoun—are all working very closely together, keep in the closest contact and are in general agreement on how we ought to proceed. I am really very pleased with the way in which the organization is functioning here.

B. Political.

5. After the rather frantic political activity leading up to the filing deadline for both presidential and senatorial candidates, we are now in a bit of a lull. The principal candidates, including Thieu and Ky, are quietly assessing the meaning of the Thieu-Ky merger and the Big Minh bid. They are also looking over the Senate lists, most of which were put together with such haste that the political implications and ramifications are only now beginning to emerge.

6. Thus at a luncheon I had for the Under Secretary, the principal civilian candidates were in a rather relaxed mood. I gathered from them and from a number of other reports that they are rather more optimistic as a result of the Thieu–Ky merger. Their reaction to Big Minh’s candidacy is cautious, but I believe they are for the most part hoping that the Assembly will decide to disqualify him.

7. There is considerable skepticism expressed by many of our contacts that Thieu and Ky will be able to work effectively in the future. Although some of these predictions are politically motivated and should be viewed as such, I feel, as I point out later, that we must recognize that the new arrangement places strains on their relationship which could cause us problems in the future.

8. The candidacy of Big Minh is the major unresolved political question at the moment. On July 6 General Cao Van Vien and all four of the Corps Commanders sent to the Assembly a joint complaint against Minh’s candidacy, referring to the decision of the Armed Forces Council against permitting Minh to return on grounds of national security.⁴

9. Also on July 6 a citizen filed a complaint against Minh’s running mate, Tran Ngoc Lieng, on the grounds that Lieng once held both French and Vietnamese citizenship. (The Constitution provides that candidates must have Vietnamese citizenship from birth, but says nothing about dual citizenship.) If Lieng is disqualified, Big Minh would automatically be eliminated from the race.⁵

10. The top military leaders appear to be united in their opposition to Big Minh’s candidacy; they are now on public record against it, and their prestige is thus engaged. In the past when the military leadership stood together on important issues, their influence on the Assembly was usually decisive. Assembly Chairman Phan Khac Suu has also told us that he is opposed to Big Minh’s candidacy.

⁴ In telegram 418 from Saigon, July 6, Bunker reported that the Generals’ complaint was based on reasons of “national security.” Minh had been barred from returning to Vietnam after his June 28 announcement in Thailand that he would campaign for the Presidency. Minh’s supporters requested that he be allowed to return by July 15. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S) In telegram 519 from Saigon, July 7, Bunker recommended against any overt American involvement in the Minh issue, since he foresaw “no reason to intervene and many reasons not to get involved.” (Ibid.) The Department demurred, however, arguing that the “denial of Minh’s candidacy in our view so deeply affects the election process that we believe we have a legitimate reason for entering into discussions about it with the [South Vietnamese] leaders.” (Telegram 3374 to Saigon, July 8; *ibid.*)

⁵ Telegram 899 from Saigon, July 12, reported that according to a member of the election committee, the case against Minh “was supported by no documentation whatsoever” and that Lieng did in fact qualify as a Vietnamese citizen under the provisions of the Franco-Vietnamese convention of 1955. (Ibid.)

11. The issue is now before the Central Election Council and we are inclined to believe that it will find against him. If it does, the decision will be reviewed by the Assembly. There is considerable reluctance to take responsibility for the decision, however, and if a plausible legal case can be made against either Big Minh or his running mate, the decision would likely be much easier for both the Council and the Assembly.

12. If the Council and the Assembly should decide to throw out the complaint against Minh, the military would probably still try to stick to their decision to keep him out of the country. Press reports from Bangkok quote Minh as saying he is determined to “appear” in Saigon soon, one way or another, and there have been hints that he would try to slip back into the country secretly if the military continue to bar his return. This would pose a hard problem for the present military leadership, and the results would be difficult to predict.

13. I continue to think that Minh’s candidacy could pose a serious threat to military unity. His bid for the presidency might also divide the nation in other ways. The Catholics are strongly opposed to his candidacy and would probably react vigorously if he continued to be a candidate. He has some Buddhist support, and while this strength is difficult to gauge, it could turn out to be enough to threaten a revival of religious tension and even open religious conflict such as that which erupted between Catholics and Buddhists in 1964. Thus, the Minh candidacy appears to me to pose a clear threat to the essential degree of political stability without which we cannot get further progress toward democratic government in this country.

14. The candidacy of Au Truong Thanh, the former Minister of Economy, is in quite another category.⁶ We judge that he has very little support. If he is barred from running, there will be no significant popular reaction. If he is allowed to run, he will get few votes. Tran Van Huong has said flatly that he thinks Thanh is working with the Viet Cong and Ha Thuc Ky has also made it clear that he has no use for Thanh. Ha Thuc Ky, in fact, alleges that Thanh filed for the presidency mainly in order to avoid arrest for his leftist connections. The Catholic press has vigorously attacked his “peace-at-any-price” statements.

⁶ Thanh ran on a peace platform calling for an end to military action and immediate negotiations. He was accused by the GVN of Viet Cong sympathies. In telegram 3372 to Saigon, July 8, the Department decried the effort to disqualify Thanh as “exceedingly dubious.” (Ibid.) In a July 11 memorandum to Rusk, Harriman recommended that Bunker “take a firm stand on this issue with Ky, Thieu and members of the National Assembly pointing out that our good name as well as that of the GVN is at stake.” (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Harriman Papers, Subject File, Bundy, William P. 1963–68)

15. The complaint against Thanh's candidacy was filed by an Assembly Deputy, Diep Van Hung, on the grounds that Thanh has had Communist connections in the past. (The electoral law bars those who "have directly or indirectly worked for Communist or pro-Communist neutralism or worked in the interests of Communism.") Hung claims that Thanh joined the Communist Party in 1952 and notes that he was arrested in 1954 and again in 1959 for activities which aided the Communists.

16. On July 7 the police held a press conference in connection with the arrest of some intellectuals charged with working with the Viet Cong. According to some press reports, Thanh was linked to those arrested and to the "intellectual proselytizing section of the Saigon Viet Cong organization."

17. While we have no hard evidence that Thanh is or was a Communist or "pro-Communist neutralist," he has certainly had many connections with the far left and near Communist factions in the past. Whatever his motives, he is now clearly trying to exploit the longing for peace in an irresponsible way. His campaign handout sheets (in themselves a violation of the electoral law) are without exception printed in both English and Vietnamese. This indicates to me that one of his targets—if not the main one—is the American press. Unfortunately, he has found a receptive audience in some correspondents.

18. I believe the precise terms of the Thieu–Ky alliance are still being defined and sorted out. This is likely to continue for some time. If they are elected, it will be a principal and crucial problem at the outset of the new government.

19. General Thang on July 6 told Lansdale that to the best of his knowledge there is only a vague understanding between Thieu and Ky on their future relationship. Thang said that when this subject came up during the final hours of deciding the Thieu–Ky coalition, Thieu indicated that Ky would have a large say in the Cabinet and Vietnamese armed forces appointments "because we are brothers in a family." However, we have a CIA report, the source of which is Ky himself, that says that Ky's future powers were spelled out in a July 6 written agreement between Thieu and Ky. According to this report, Ky must approve all important government decisions, in particular those dealing with major military matters and efforts to end the war. He is also to have the power to name the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. If this report is accurate, knowledge of the agreement is apparently limited to a very small group of officers. I shall be trying to run this down in the next few days. If not already done, I think it important that a definite understanding should be reached between Thieu and Ky on their respective roles, and that we should exert our influence to bring this about.

20. The Thieu–Ky merger has not pleased some of Ky’s supporters. General Loan is known to be quite unhappy about the arrangement. Some of Ky’s Catholic supporters in the Greater Solidarity Force are now reportedly hesitating to get behind the combined slate. CVT (trade unions) labor leader Tran Quoc Buu yesterday told an Embassy officer that the slate is now “too military,” and it is too early to decide whether or not the CVT should back Thieu–Ky. It is probably not at all surprising that the main civilian candidates should be saying that the Thieu–Ky ticket is weaker than the Ky–Loc slate, but they are saying it with a good deal of conviction.

21. While most of the major candidates are still organizing their campaigns, some of them have also sketched out some platform ideas. We know that Ky intended to run on the record of his government, with promises of further economic and political progress if elected. Probably this will also be the basic line of the Thieu–Ky platform.

[Here follows discussion of economic and military conditions.]

Bunker

238. Notes of Meeting¹

Washington, July 12, 1967.

Notes from Meeting of the President with Secretary McNamara to Review the Secretary’s Findings during Vietnam Trip

Secretary McNamara said he “reviewed all aspects of operations in Vietnam, economic, political and military.”

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Tom Johnson’s Notes of Meetings, 7/12/67. Top Secret; Literally Eyes Only. The notes were presented to the President as a memorandum from Tom Johnson at 7:30 p.m. There is an indication on the notes that the President saw them. According to the President’s Daily Diary, the meeting was held in the Cabinet Room and lasted from 1:05 to 2:38 p.m. It was followed by a luncheon, 2:50–3:40 p.m., of which no record has been found. (Ibid.) Rostow prepared an agenda/outline for the 1 p.m. meeting, “Meeting With President on Vietnam,” July 12. (Ibid., National Security File, Files of Walt Rostow, Meetings with the President, July–Dec. 1967) In addition to the participants who spoke at the meeting, Rostow, McPherson, and Tom Johnson attended. Afterward, McNamara held a press conference during which he stated: “I think some more U.S. military personnel will be required. I am not sure how many. I am certain of one thing: that we must use more effectively the personnel that are presently there.” See *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1967*, pp. 942–944.

On the *economic front* he reported:

- Progress was measurable since his last trip.
- The port situation was operating smoothly.
- The import situation has stabilized.
- Threat of “run away” inflation has been reduced.

The Secretary said that the number of barges which have been backed up in ports because of poor port operations had been reduced from 800 on his last trip to 30–40 on this trip.

On the *political front*, the Secretary reported:

- The “greatest danger” is facing us.
- A possible split between Ky and Thieu.
- There is “no real accommodation” between the two men.
- There is no real division of responsibility between the two men.
- Ky is restive, wants more authority.
- There currently is no means for Ky to attain authority.
- Ky may not support the ticket in the upcoming elections.

On the *personnel area*, the Secretary reported:

- The Embassy is operating “the best I have seen it.”
- Bunker is in full control.
- Bunker and his staff are effective in dealing with Ky and Thieu.
- The senior military leadership is strong.
- Komer and his pacification program have exceeded expectations.
- Komer has motivated his people quite well.

On the *military front*, the Secretary reported:

- Operations are proceeding well.
- Reports on the scene are better than press reports at home.
- There is reason to expect significant military losses by the Viet Cong in coming months.
- “There is not a military stalemate.”
- Long stretches of highways have been opened for travel and feeder roads are opening up.

On the *pacification subject*, the Secretary reported:

- There has been progress.
- The progress has exceeded his expectations.
- The progress is slow however.
- The Secretary expects nothing dramatic in the next six months.

On the *military operations*, the Secretary proposed that:

- There should be an increase to battalion size operations in Laos.
- U.S. forces must watch Cambodia and the infiltration routes in that area.

Secretary McNamara said the President had asked Secretary Katzenbach and him to ensure the need for complete unity among the South Vietnamese military leadership and emphasize that the elections must be free and honest.

Secretary McNamara: Ky and Thieu are of the attitude that they will do what we want them to do on the matter of negotiations. He said the U.S. will have no trouble with Ky and Thieu if bona fide negotiations have to be tied to stopping of the bombing in North Vietnam. He said, however, they would not settle for a Korean-type negotiation.

Secretary McNamara said the press in Vietnam is in a "very bad mood." They are cynical, skeptical and think we have a military stalemate. They believe pacification is at a standstill. They view the election with cynicism and skepticism. Secretary McNamara said Ambassador Bunker anticipates a bad press for the next six months.

Secretary McNamara said the press in Vietnam believes that the war isn't worth the price we are incurring. They believe the people to be corrupt. They believe that the Vietnamese Government cannot be stabilized politically.

Secretary Katzenbach made the following points on the *press*:

- He agreed with Secretary McNamara.
- The press does not feel the Vietnamese are doing their part of the job.
- Press feels that corruption is getting worse and worse.
- Press is cynical about the elections because they believe the same government will continue in office.
- He said many of the correspondents have "been out there too long."

On the subject of *additional troops*, Secretary McNamara reported:

- General Westmoreland and his staff want 100,000 troops.
- The General and his staff believe that we will continue to make progress without that large a number but that the progress will continue at a slower than optimum rate.

If U.S. troops tighten up, Secretary McNamara said "we can get by with less."

- There is some waste and slippage.
- Westmoreland and his people agree there is some slippage.
- McNamara said U. S. could put civilians in military jobs, particularly in construction battalions and by asking the Koreans to send more troops to support their 21 battalions which are currently in Vietnam.
- McNamara said 5,000 troops could be picked up by substituting Koreans for U. S. troops who currently are in support of Korean units.
- The South Vietnamese could do more by:

- a. Extending tours of service beyond the current three-year requirement.
- b. Reduce draft ages from 20 to 18.

The Australians, Thais, Koreans, New Zealanders and Filipinos should be asked to carry more of their share of the burden. The Secretary said he was referring to combat troops.

On the subject of *morale*, the Secretary reported that he is more impressed than ever by the U. S. forces there. He said that morale is superb and their fighting ability highly effective.

On the subject of *food*, the Secretary reported that there are no problems. The food is excellent. Men in remote combat units receive two hot meals per day.

On the *medical front*, the Secretary reported that there were absolutely no problems. He said the units are well equipped and that the supplies and medical items exceeded demand.

The Secretary said there were no shortages of clothes or other personal equipment items.

The Secretary's only suggestion for equipment change was for more Marine ground equipment. He said the field commanders would like more helicopters, but pointed out that during this year U. S. forces will add 800 more helicopters than U. S. forces will lose.

The Secretary said that there were two serious technical problems:

—Night vision is the single biggest problem. New technology is being developed, but nothing yet has offered any major breakthrough.

—There is poor targeting at night because of the night vision problem. Night air missions are primarily "noisy" because they often fail to hit the targets.

—Pacification is a serious problem because it is difficult to detect who is a Viet Cong and who is not. On this, the Secretary said the current means of identifying individuals and their loyalties is, at best, "sloppy."

On the subject of *re-enlistments*, the Secretary reported:

—Re-enlistments are higher than expected.

—Military advisors turn over more rapidly than we would like.

—The senior officers complain because they want their families with them. This is the reason many want to return home rather than re-enlist.

On the subject of *R and R (rest and relaxation)*, the Secretary reported:

—There is very little.

—For the average combat unit their mission requires them to be in the field 7 days a week, 12 months of the year with only a 5 day out-of-the-country leave and some time back at base camp.

On *corruption* in Vietnam, the Secretary reported:

—It is widespread

—We do not have an effective program to counter it.

On *psychological warfare*, the Secretary reported:

—The program is not well managed.

—The forces are seeking to improve it.

On the *bombing policy*, the Secretary reported:

- The commanders want no restrictions.
- The commanders want an intensification and escalation of the bombing.
- The commanders want to mine the port areas.
- The military commanders want to attack the port areas.
- The military leaders would like to attack further the industrial base of Vietnam.

On bombing policy, the Secretary said that the military commanders think there have been much more results since the Secretary's last trip. The Secretary said he did not agree.

The Secretary said "we have destroyed more, but what we destroyed has less effect on the war effort in the South."

The Secretary said bombing of railways has had less effect because the capacity of the rail lines is greater than the flow requirements. He said that what has been destroyed in rail targeting also has had very little effect on the war in the south.

The Secretary said that the Air Commanders are doing a good job on tactical air programs. The Air Commanders want to reduce the circles of restriction around Hanoi and Haiphong. They want to hit the ports with mines and "shoulder the ships out."

The Secretary reported that U. S. forces had wiped out about 80% of the power capacity in North Vietnam, but that the North Vietnamese are using mobile generators.

The Secretary reported he had talked with Ky and Thieu about:

- Lowering the draft age
- Extending service tours
- Improving current programs underway

The Secretary said that Ambassador Locke is preparing a manpower program to increase the effective use of Vietnamese power.

II.²

General Wheeler reported to the President:

- There is no military stalemate.
- There has been an unbroken series of military successes.
- The enemy continues to be off balance.
- The North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong continue their initiatives in the demilitarized zone and in the central highlands but these initiatives are being effectively countered.
- The Marines in the DMZ clobbered Viet Cong units last week killing 900 and forcing a pull back by the opposing forces.
- The logistical arrangements are excellent.

² There is no "I." on the source text.

- There are no great military problems in sight.
- In the 2nd Corps area the military commander reported to General Wheeler that 86% of the population is under control by allied forces and 85% of the roads.
- In the Delta, slow progress is being made.
- There is evidence that the Viet Cong are getting very “low in the barrel” in their recruiting.
- 13 to 16 year old kids have been found among the corpses of Viet Cong units in the South, indicating the difficulties being faced by the Viet Cong in replacing their manpower.
- The South Vietnamese Army units are “spotty.”
- The South Vietnamese are under strength.

On the subject of U.S. forces, General Wheeler reported:

- The morale of the U.S. troops is absolutely superb.
- The performance of U.S. troops under adverse climatic conditions is excellent.
- A new drug has been developed which takes care of 50% of the severe malaria cases.
- A close watch is necessary to prevent severe cases of trench foot. (Wheeler said after 48 hours of wet conditions, it is necessary to pull the men out of their situation in order for them to dry their feet.)
- The medical units are doing an excellent job.

On the matter of bombing policy, General Wheeler reported:

- Disagreement with Secretary McNamara.
- During the good weather of the first half of 1967, substantial destruction has been taking place in water craft, trucks, and railroad strikes.
- The northern railroad lines have been hit hard.
- The northeast line was struck 92 times, closed for 3 days, and much shuttling was required.

General Wheeler recommended:

- That bombing restrictions around Hanoi be reduced to a 10 mile limit.
- That bombing restrictions around Haiphong be reduced to a 4 mile limit.
- No attacks on shipping were recommended.
- Armed aerial reconnaissance from the Chinese buffer zone on down was recommended.

General Wheeler pointed out that the Mark 36 weapons were being used effectively in inland waterways to interdict forces.

Secretary McNamara pointed out the Mark 36 can be adjusted and detonated by the movement of metal objects above it and is much more effective than mines of earlier periods.

General Wheeler summed up his report by saying:

- There is no stalemate.
- The morale of the men is outstanding.
- The performance of the Army of the South Vietnamese is fair and must be improved.

—The U.S. and the allies should continue maximum pressure. The method is unrelenting pressure.

—There has been steady progress.

III.

William Leonhart reported to the President that there is a strong need for more people in AID programs and in pacification effort. The President directed Secretary Katzenbach to see what could be done on this in conjunction with AID Director William Gaud.

IV.

On pacification, Robert Komer reported to the President:

—That he was more encouraged than when he left about pacification in general.

—That recruiting of Viet Cong seems to be very much a case of attrition.

—That a study under way indicated it would show that the Viet Cong are recruiting about 3500 a month compared to 7000 a month when a previous study on recruitment was made.

—That under these circumstances it was becoming more of a "classical war" where north versus south rather than a situation where there was strong internal conflict in the south by the Viet Cong against the South Vietnamese.

—U.S. and allied forces are imposing some sort of ceiling on the numbers of individuals who are infiltrating.

On the political front, Komer reported:

—There is a lower level of competence in the GVN.

—Komer said it is a situation where they are "smart crooks, rather than dumb honest men."

—Komer said "We may not be backing the right horse."

—He suggested that perhaps the U.S. should be supporting civilian candidates for the ticket rather than military candidates.

—Komer suggested that a civilian leadership would "get the military back into the battlefield where they belong."

—Civilians would be perhaps less corrupt although not necessarily more effective.

—Komer said he was discouraged by the political outlook.

—He said there must be a half decent government in Vietnam to back the pacification effort.

—He said a military leadership is better, though not much better.

—He said we need more U.S. advisors in a more direct U.S. role in directing the Vietnamese military.

V.

Clark Clifford pointed out that public sentiment in this country sometimes calls the Vietnamese conflict "the war that can't be won."

He asked Secretary McNamara, is that true.

Secretary McNamara reported:

- U.S. units will continue to destroy the enemy's main forces units.
- There is a limit to what the enemy can send in to the South.
- The U.S. units are destroying a significant capacity of the large units.
- For the first time Secretary McNamara said he felt that if we follow the same program we will win the war and end the fighting.
- Hanoi is testing the unity and patience of the American people.

VI.

Richard Helms said an important issue which should be considered by all of the individuals in the room is what kind of political program should be *after* the elections. He said more consideration should be given to a political program by the Vietnamese which eventually will permit the withdrawal of U.S. forces and U.S. direction.

VII.

Reporting on his findings during the Vietnam trip, Secretary Katzenbach reported:

- U.S. and allied forces can win depending on the performance, if we get it, of the government of Vietnam.
- Ambassador Bunker has taken firm control. He knows what he is doing.
- The service time of U.S. civilian personnel out there must be extended.
- Many of the senior officials feel, as Secretary McNamara said, that they need their wives and families with them in order for them to stay in Vietnam longer.
- There is a need for more young political officers. In general, our policy has not been aggressive enough in getting these people in.

The President asked Secretary Katzenbach to undertake a complete study of this subject, and to arrange for a meeting with the President on this topic next week.³ Secretary Katzenbach said we have got to get more people out there, but it is a very dirty, very risky job. He pointed out how inspired he was by a meeting with some of the political officers in the field.

Secretary Katzenbach said he would rate the U.S. effort in Vietnam as a "B" in many areas. He said the political situation was "hairy." Continuing his report, Secretary Katzenbach reported:

³ There is no record of any meeting between the President and Katzenbach during the next week. (Johnson Library, President's Daily Diary)

—Ky is bitter.

—The government could fall apart.

—There are only about two to three weeks left for the U.S. to work on the political situation.

—Katzenbach said that this government must be “guarantors” of an agreement between Ky and Thieu which will be mutually satisfying and agreeable to the two men.

—He said, personally, he would rate the U.S. support behind the two men (Ky and Thieu) rather than one of the others.

In summarizing, Secretary Katzenbach made these points:

—He agreed with General Wheeler that the military pressure must be kept on.

—He said he did not want to expand the military activities to bomb the harbors.

—He said he would go along with General Wheeler’s recommendations for similar restrictions around Hanoi and Haiphong.

—He said he did not favor a pause in the bombing without a further indication from Hanoi of what it would do in return.

—He said this is not the point in time for a bombing pause.

—At some point, Katzenbach said we may have to call their bluff and do it.

—The pacification effort is slow. You cannot do it instantly.

The President asked about the pay of the Vietnamese forces. Secretary McNamara pointed out that it was very poor, particularly that of the popular forces. The President directed Secretary McNamara to make a full study of this. Secretary McNamara reported that one was already under way.⁴

VIII.

Secretary Rusk said that compared with Greece, Berlin, the early days of 1942, that the Vietnamese war is “past that stage.”

He said, “We are going to come through this thing.” He pointed out that we must get the American people to realize that the U. S. forces are going to come through this.

⁴ Measures to address the necessary renovation of the RVNAF appeared in the report entitled “Manpower Mobilization,” July 7, prepared by a task force chaired by Arthur M. Ross. On July 17 Locke forwarded it to Wheeler and Rostow. The Ross report recommended the development of a program for the mobilization of civilian and military personnel resources by the GVN, which until that time had no such program on a national scale. In addition, it criticized the current structure of the GVN’s manpower planning organization, which was not integrated with national defense, economic, or social requirements. It cited the need to incorporate previously neglected groups, such as the Chinese, refugees, defectors, and Montagnards, and recommended the establishment of a comprehensive system of statistical management relating to mobilization. (Department of Defense, Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 911/100 (17 Jul 67), IR #1734, and Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 2 G, Manpower Mobilization in Vietnam)

IX.

The President said that there is an attitude in this country today that we are not doing all we should to get the war over as quickly as it should be.

The President said that although we have lost 10,000 men in Vietnam that he is constantly reminded that the North Vietnamese have lost more in 60 days than we have lost in the past 6 years. The President said we cannot get it over in 60 days but we must make every effort to try to do what we can.

The President said the U.S. people do think, perhaps, that the war cannot be won. The President said he was more frightened by this than by the Thieu–Ky difficulties. He pointed out that Ky has been Number One and Thieu Number Two for several years, and perhaps some accommodation can be reached with a division of responsibility.

The President said he agreed that we need more troops, but he urged his advisors to “shave it the best we can.”

The President said he would be talking with General Westmoreland later today on the troop matter.⁵ The President said that more men will have to be put in but the question of how many will be discussed with a number of people, including General Westmoreland.

The President said we must see what we can get out of the Thais, the Koreans and our other allies. The President said he may ask Clark Clifford and General Maxwell Taylor to go out on a Presidential mission to talk with the leadership of the allies, including Prime Minister Holt of Australia.

Secretary Katzenbach concluded by saying that if the American people gave us a chance here at home, that he had every reason to believe that we could win the war in the field.

⁵ Westmoreland attended his mother's funeral in South Carolina and arrived at the White House by helicopter at 10:30 p.m. He then attended dinner with the President and his wife. (*Ibid.*, President's Daily Dairy)

239. Notes of Meeting¹

Washington, July 13, 1967, 12:40–1:02 p.m.

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING
WITH
SECRETARY McNAMARA
GENERAL WESTMORELAND
GENERAL WHEELER
GEORGE CHRISTIAN

The President said General Westmoreland was upset last night because of the press reports. The press indicated to General Westmoreland that Secretary McNamara had questioned the General's management of the war when the Secretary briefed the press at the White House on July 12.

The President said he told General Westmoreland Wednesday night:

—We would carefully review everything.

—Secretary McNamara, General Westmoreland, and the President feel that General Westmoreland's team in Vietnam is the best we have ever seen.

—The President said he has never heard anybody who has ever been critical of General Westmoreland in any way.

—The President said that Westmoreland has been assured that he will have the troops he needs. The President referred back to many earlier statements he has made which said that the General's suggestions would be reviewed in light of existing situations and the General would be given whatever he needed. The President said there is an acceptable area on the number of troops and that we will be announcing these numbers in a few weeks. This agreement is shared fully by General Westmoreland, Secretary McNamara, and General Wheeler of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The President said there is a question of what other countries will do in response to our request for additional manpower. They must answer two questions:

- 1) Do they give additional troops, and
- 2) When, where, and how will they be provided.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings, 7/13/67. Top Secret; Literally Eyes Only. The meeting was held in the Cabinet Room following the NSC meeting. Tom Johnson forwarded these notes to the President under cover of a July 13 memorandum at 5:30 p.m. (Ibid.)

General Wheeler asserted that as a matter of military security and prudence the figures should not be disclosed. (He indicated this would be notifying the enemy in advance of our manpower program.)

240. Notes of Meeting¹

Washington, July 13, 1967, 1:25–2:45 p.m.

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH SECRETARY McNAMARA GENERAL WHEELER GENERAL WESTMORELAND GEORGE CHRISTIAN

[Here follows brief discussion of a White House ceremony honoring retiring Admiral McDonald and of the Congo.]

The President said that General Westmoreland was returning tonight to South Carolina to pick up his wife and then return to Vietnam.

General Westmoreland said that Congressman Rivers had asked him to stop by his office this afternoon. The group agreed this would be a good idea. General Westmoreland said he saw Senator Russell for five minutes during the ceremony, and all agreed that this was sufficient.

Secretary McNamara said that there was "complete accord" on how to proceed on the troop question. He reported to the President that 19 or 21 battalions would be required and that total troop strength would run 525,000.²

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings, 7/13/67. Eyes Only. The meeting was held in the Family Dining Room of the White House.

² On July 20 Wheeler submitted to the President JCSM-416-67, a detailed list of forces for the increased strength of U.S. military forces in Vietnam. In a memorandum to Wheeler, August 10, McNamara offered tentative approval for the recommended force augmentation. On August 14 McNamara formally approved the Program 5 deployment. See *The Pentagon Papers*, The Senator Gravel Edition, Vol. IV, pp. 523–528. The plan for the Program 5 deployment approved by the President on July 12 (see Document 238) included augmentation of 33,297 Army, 4,234 Navy, 2,242 Air Force, and 7,523 Marine Corps personnel, which amounted to a total addition of 47,296 for an authorized strength in South Vietnam of 525,000.

The Secretary pointed out there may be some press speculation on this figure, particularly after testimony he has made on the Hill to the Congressional committees. The Secretary said that the field commanders would be supplied with the men required.

The Secretary said that the discussions which were begun in Vietnam with General Westmoreland and with his staff were continued this morning. The Secretary reported "complete agreement on this." The Secretary said that the matter must be discussed with the allies before final decisions are made.

General Wheeler reported that the Australians might be able to provide one additional battalion. He said he had military reports that the Australians are ready and willing and that the Australian government would be receptive to a request for additional troops.

General Wheeler also reported that he did not believe any troops could be obtained from the Philippines. He said perhaps one additional combat brigade could be required from the Koreans. He said that the Thais should be asked to fill out their regular combat team with at least two more battalions.

Secretary McNamara said that it was possible to say that the Vietnamese planned to increase their force units in Vietnam. He said, however, it would be unwise to announce this now. The Secretary said we must talk to our allies before any discussion of this is made public.

General Westmoreland said that for reasons of military security that we should not make any announcement of troop levels or planned increases.

Secretary McNamara said that the figures could be held reasonably tight for a few weeks. The Secretary said there must be a plan in the Department, there must be proposals put down on paper, and there must be Congressional testimony on the defense budget. All of this would result in leaks eventually, the Secretary said.

General Wheeler said that the military and the Secretary of Defense are in accord on the troop decision. General Wheeler said this meets the need for Vietnam.

General Westmoreland said there is a plan to organize a division in South Vietnam, taking Task Force Oregon and organizing it into an Americal Division such as was organized during World War II. General Westmoreland said this would be handled by picking up bits and pieces of units which are currently in action.

General Westmoreland pointed out that over the past two years a logistical base has been developed which can support the current force level of combat troops and many more. He pointed out that this meant that additional troops coming into Vietnam could be used for combat rather than some being used for support and some for combat as has been the policy in the past.

General Westmoreland said that by developing a very substantial logistical base that the units were capable of supporting many more combat troops than now are deployed.

The President asked the group whether or not he should send General Taylor and Clark Clifford on Presidential missions designed to discuss with the allies possible troop increases on their part.

Secretary McNamara and the group said yes, that General Taylor was highly respected and that Clark Clifford was a logical choice.

Secretary McNamara said the situation of more Thai troops will be a new burden on General Westmoreland rather than a benefit. He pointed out the reason for needing to get more Thai troops into South Vietnam was to teach them how to defend themselves.

The Secretary said that more Australians and Koreans would be a valuable asset to the total effort.

The Secretary and General Wheeler agreed that “we should put the bite” on Thailand for a larger troop commitment. They said that the Thais must be prepared to help themselves. Both agreed that it would be appropriate to send Clark Clifford and General Taylor to Vietnam first to consult with the allies in Vietnam and see how they are doing in the field before going to the countries from which they are sent to meet with the leaders of those countries.³

On the question of censorship all said that the price which would have to be paid for censorship would be too great. Secretary McNamara, George Christian, General Westmoreland and General Wheeler said that while they are for censorship at times, that we would pay a terrible price for it.

George Christian said that censorship would be a morass. He said, “We cannot do it.” General Wheeler said that the correspondents in Vietnam are immature, naïve and hostile. Secretary McNamara said he had talked with USIA Director Leonard Marks this morning. Marks had just returned from Vietnam. Marks told the Secretary that the correspondents are too young and have no in-depth background about what has taken place in Vietnam. They are out there to win Pulitzer prizes for sensational articles rather than objective reporting.

It was agreed that no censorship would be taken.

General Westmoreland said on the matter of troop strength that he was delighted with the outcome of the deliberations.

He said that with the additional men “we will have a formidable force.” With the troops, General Westmoreland said that progress can be accelerated once the troops are deployed and placed.

³ See Document 253.

General Wheeler said that General Westmoreland is fully satisfied. He agreed we must talk to our allies about the total package.

General Westmoreland said that he had not asked for any specific number of troops. He asserted that his recommendations have been honored.

The President asked the group if we stop the bombing and if elections are held, would South Vietnam go Communist?

Secretary McNamara said, from what he had learned in the field, definitely no—the country would not go Communist.

[Here follows discussion unrelated to Vietnam.]

241. Draft Telegram From Secretary of State Rusk to the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker)¹

Washington, undated.

For Ambassador Bunker from the Secretary of State.

1. I concur in the program of action you outlined in your message to me of July 11.² However, I wish to ensure that our program of advice to Ky is in support of the Thieu–Ky ticket, with Ky as the organizational focal point, and is not a device that Ky can use as leverage to maneuver Thieu aside. Thus, you should inform Ky through the established channel that he needs to work out his relationship with Thieu to their mutual satisfaction and campaign energetically within the framework of those understandings. Continuation of our action program should be firmly based on the precondition that Ky and Thieu do in fact achieve a clear understanding between them on their relationship in the campaign and after the elections. I realize that such a relationship will be subject to change in light of developments.

2. In this connection, we have better contact with Ky than Thieu, and what we know of the Thieu–Ky relationship comes largely from

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Intelligence File, Vietnamese (South) Elections 1967. Secret; Sensitive. An attached covering note from Read to Rusk, July 13, indicates that Habib drafted the cable; Bundy, Katzenbach, and the CIA cleared it; and Rostow's clearance would be sought before its transmission. An attached covering memorandum from Rostow to Rusk, July 14, reads: "The President is against any financial support to candidates in the Vietnamese elections—presidential or parliamentary." According to notations on the covering note, the telegram was received in Saigon on June 16 via CAS channels, but a copy of it as sent has not been found.

² Document 235.

Ky or from Ky supporters. We need adequate access to Thieu so we can cross check Ky's version of his understandings with Thieu. Moreover, we need a better relationship with Thieu to avoid his misunderstanding our position and to allay those suspicions of us that seem to bother him.

3. Regarding your last paragraph, it is my understanding that the program consists of guidance and advice in return for information and influence and that any recommendation regarding material support will be submitted to Washington for approval. Material support is to be considered within the effort outlined in your para 3E and will not involve direct financing of the Thieu–Ky presidential campaign itself.

4. Independently of the effort with Ky, modest financial support for individual candidates for the legislature is acceptable in principle and I await your recommendations.

5. I would welcome your views regarding the relationship we should develop with any of the major civilian candidates. We think such relationships could be more or less open and could usefully serve to show Thieu and Ky that we are interested in real competition. They would also meet possible leakage concerning our role vis-à-vis Ky and cover the contingency of a civilian victory.

242. Telegram From the Station in Saigon to the Central Intelligence Agency¹

Saigon, July 14, 1967, 1115Z.

CAS 206. The following is the text of a message from Ambassador Bunker to the Secretary of State released by the Ambassador at 1115 hours, 14 July 1967:

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Sensitive. Transmitted to the Department of State under cover of a memorandum from Carver to Read. Despite the lack of direct funding for the Thieu–Ky campaign from Washington, the CIA Station succeeded in having Ky arrange the establishment and funding from Vietnamese sources of a front organization, the All-Vietnam Bloc, in order to legitimize and ensure the election prospects of the military slate. (Telegram CAS 9395 from Saigon, July 18; Central Intelligence Agency, DDO/ISS Files, Job 78–32R, Box 1, Folder 11, ARC) In addition, although money was not given directly to the Thieu–Ky campaign, according to telegram DIR 38735 to Saigon, September 27, Acting Secretary of State Katzenbach authorized payments as high as [text not declassified] each to Deputies of the National Assembly who would guarantee that they would vote in favor of confirming the electoral victory of Thieu and Ky in the validation vote on October 2. (Ibid.)

"In a previous message this week,² in which I recommended that CAS be given approval to conduct a political action program, I mentioned a political alliance which Ky and his advisors have been planning. Comprised of Hoa Hao, Cao Dai and VNQDD elements, this grouping has been envisaged by Ky as the nucleus for the main thrust in support of the Thieu/Ky campaign.³ The benefits that a civilian group in this role affords are many; it has, as well, the potential for the broad-based, post-election political party which Vietnam needs.

"Plans now call for the public launching of this alliance at a mass rally to be held in Saigon on August 1st, the official opening day of the campaign. Obviously the more active this alliance becomes in support of the Thieu/Ky candidacies, the less the government will be vulnerable to the charge of depending solely on its military and governmental powers to insure election in September.

"CAS is proposing through its own channels that financial support be given now to the alliance to allow it to put its plans in motion as expeditiously as possible. An equal amount will be provided by the Thieu/Ky forces to maintain the momentum through the campaign.

"In addition to the Presidential support consideration, CAS has raised the question of financial assistance to a selected number of their Parliamentary assets. In no instance is the sum contemplated large, but the support will enable us to exert some political influence on those who are elected to see that the new government gets off to as favorable a start as possible. I have had an opportunity to review the listing of individuals who may be given support. I recommend that both of the CAS requests be favorably received in Washington."

² Document 235.

³ In a July 17 memorandum to Bundy, Carver reported the substance of TDCS DB-315/02780-67, July 15, a record of a conversation between Ky and [text not declassified], which contained intelligence information on Ky's plans for his front organization. Ky declared that he was "now besieged on all sides by people asking for funds with which to support the Thieu/Ky ticket, including dozens of aspirants running for the Senate or Assembly." Ky stated that it was necessary for him to reject these requests due to his limited funds. He also mentioned that he would like to merge two other groups, the one behind retired General Tran Van Don and labor leader Tran Quoc Buu with the front containing the other religious and political parties. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 14 VIET S) The U.S. Government was kept informed of Thieu-Ky campaign affairs through a covert contact initiated in mid-July. A July 17 memorandum from Carver to Bundy, summarized TDCS DB-315/02783-67, July 17, a report on the first meeting between [text not declassified] the Prime Minister's designated intermediary, and [text not declassified] of the CIA Station. At this meeting [text not declassified] mentioned [text not declassified] that funds were needed to support GVN officials who had resigned to run for office. (Ibid.)

243. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, July 14, 1967, 1230Z.

1082. 1. I saw Ky the morning of July 13. Our discussion was relatively brief due to the arrival of Tran Van Huong for courtesy call on PriMin.

2. I informed Ky that I had heard reports from several sources that since he had agreed to withdraw from the Presidential race and to run with Thieu that he was undecided as to what course to follow in the campaign—i.e. to play a passive role or to work as actively for the joint ticket as he had done for his own Presidential candidacy. I told him I thought it highly important that he should take an active part in the campaign, that he has much to contribute to the ticket and to his country. I mentioned that the measures for reform which he had described to Secretary McNamara and to me were impressive. It was in his own interest and that of the country to work for the opportunity to bring some of his ideas for reform to fruition.

3. I told Ky again that I considered his decision to step down from his Presidential candidacy was commendable and clearly taken in the interest of the country and of the armed forces. I felt that his action has increased his prestige and the measure of his character. I suggested to him a parallel in President Johnson's acceptance of the Vice Presidency in 1960.

4. Ky said that as a matter of fact his troubles just began on June 30, that the ten or twelve days since then had been bad. People have been coming to him constantly, asking why he stepped down, why he allowed himself to be out-maneuvered by Thieu. He has replied to them that he took the decision consciously. He hadn't allowed himself to be out maneuvered. He felt the decision was necessary in the interest of the armed forces and of the country. The Buddhists have come to see him, the Cao Dai, the Hoa Hao and others. All are seeking his advice as to what they should do. It has brought home to him sharply the dangers and the divisions which threaten the country in this period and he feels that he is the only one who can keep these under control.

5. I told him that if this is true, then he has an even greater responsibility to take an active part in the campaign. Pursuing this further, I asked him directly whether he had a definite understanding with Thieu. He replied simply "Yes, I have", adding, however, that it re-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Exdis. Received at 11:11 a.m.

mained to be seen whether Thieu sticks to his word. In this regard, he said, the armed forces leadership has decided that they should hold more frequent meetings, at which, of course, Thieu and Ky would be present, in an effort to try to reestablish the cordial relationship which formerly existed among the top Generals.

6. Ky reiterated that the whole situation has kept him under a heavy strain and that he really ought to get away for a few days. I urged him to do so.

7. We discussed campaign issues briefly, Ky said that he felt two primary issues are corruption and how to end the war. On the latter he again stated, as he had to Secretary McNamara, that the GVN is always ready to talk to Hanoi.² In this connection I called his attention to reports that a number of North Vietnamese Ambassadors had been recalled to Hanoi. I said it was not clear whether this was routine or not but suggested that he might in view of this make a public statement renewing this expression of willingness to talk to Hanoi.

8. On the question of negotiations, Ky stressed that they need careful preparation and are not something to rush into. With an elected and stable government the GVN can begin to approach the problem, but with careful step by step preparation of any moves to be made. The danger with the line being taken by Au Truong Thanh and others of his ilk is that they are not thinking through the problem. I had the feeling that while Ky feels strongly on the peace issue that he is not likely to press it in the campaign unless he is pushed into it by his opponents.

9. I took occasion to refer to the question of Big Minh and commented that I thought their position would be much stronger if the decision to reject his candidacy and keep him out of the country should be fairly based on legal considerations, since I understood the objections filed by General Vien and the corps commanders referred only to the threat to national security. I added that I, of course, recognized that this was their business and was sure they were conscious to the sensitivity of how the matter is handled. Ky agreed with my views but made no other comment.

10. I also raised again the desirability of inviting international observers to come to Viet-Nam during the campaign and to view the elections. I repeated points I had made with him previously stressing that the spotlight in which South Viet-Nam finds itself demands a level of perfection in the conduct of the elections well above the role observers could play in offsetting harsh or biased press criticism. He agreed with all I had to say but made no commitment. (Do has told Calhoun that

² See Document 236.

a formal invitation will be sent to U Thant and FonOff is considering other possibilities.)

11. Our discussion was cut off by the arrival of Tran Van Huong for his appointment. I intend, therefore, to see Ky again in the next few days to pursue it, particularly as I wish to go into greater detail as to his reaction to the progress of the elections and his attitude toward the campaign. I also intend to see Thieu for a similar discussion with him, and I am seeing Bui Diem this evening.³

Bunker

³ In telegram 1164 from Saigon, July 15, Bunker reported Bui Diem's statements that some younger officers believed, as a result of Ky's stepping aside, that the United States was backing Huong for President, a charge that Bunker denied. Diem also affirmed that a written agreement between Thieu and Ky existed, and mentioned that a crucial meeting of the ARVN general officers would be held on July 17 in order to resolve problems surrounding the Thieu–Ky candidacy. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S) At that meeting, according to a report given to Bunker by Diem, a second document emerged that "sought to spell out the arrangements in more precise detail." (Telegram 1476 from Saigon, July 20; *ibid.*, POL 15–1 VIET S) In a meeting with Bunker on July 16, Thieu did not affirm the existence of a written agreement but did state that he would divide power with Ky. (Telegram 1232 from Saigon, July 17; *ibid.*)

244. Notes of Meeting¹

Washington, July 14, 1967.

The President said to Clark Clifford that he wanted Clifford and General Maxwell Taylor to go to Saigon, be briefed on the operations there, then go to the nations fighting with us in Vietnam to see what additional assistance could be rendered.

More importantly, the President said he wanted the mission to review with the allies what we are doing in Vietnam. In short, to give them more information about the war effort.

President said that he wanted the effort to be kept *extremely quiet*, that he wanted no advance publicity on the mission, and that he wanted it handled under the cover of the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings, 7/14/67. Top Secret; Eyes Only. The President met with Clifford, McNamara, Katzenbach, Wheeler, Rostow, and Tom Johnson from 12:51 p.m. to 1:15 p.m. (*Ibid.*, President's Daily Diary)

The President added:

—The Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board is a good cover, since Clifford is chairman and Taylor is a member.

—The reports to the heads of governments will let them “know that we are thinking about them, make them feel informed.”

—It would be an effort to determine how much more the allies could do in Vietnam in troop additions.

—Clifford can be advised by McNamara and Wheeler how much each nation can supply in troops before the Presidential mission departed.

Clark Clifford asked these questions:

—Should we make any new contacts with nations who are not represented in Vietnam now? Malaysia was mentioned. (Secretary McNamara said he did not think any troops could be arranged from Malaysia.)

—Should the allies be advised in advance of this mission?

It was agreed that a cable would be prepared to indicate the fact that Taylor–Clifford would be visiting. The President would send it.²

Clifford cautioned against expecting the team to return with any signatures on the line.

The President warned that the mission should get into the troop question slowly.

Rostow indicated that the toughest area would be the Philippines. Secretary Katzenbach said that Holt and the South Vietnamese [*Australians?*] will be willing to give additional troops.

General Wheeler added:

—The Australians will give one battalion and one battery now and would give one battalion and one more battery by September, if asked.

—The Australia politicians are ready to be asked.

The President said the generals—both in the Pentagon and in Vietnam—must be told not to talk about the level of troops. He mentioned the lead on troops in morning newspapers, and the speculation on numbers (by Max Frankel of the *Times*).

The President said “we are going to send Westmoreland the troops he needs. I told him that. That has been our policy and will continue to be.”

The President said that the details on numbers of troops must be worked out. “We have a general idea and a general meeting of the minds on numbers.”

² See Document 253.

The President continued:

—“We want to see what these people are willing to do.

—“I would hope that the South Vietnamese would

a. Drop their draft age to 18.

b. Put in an extra 65,000 troops after the September elections.

Clark Clifford concluded by saying he did not want to leave the impression any firm commitments would be brought back.

245. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, July 17, 1967, 10:05 a.m.

Mr. President:

Herewith my net recommendations for immediate changes in bombing the northern part of North Viet Nam.

1. Reduce the present 30 nautical mile radius restricted area around Hanoi to 10 and the 10 nautical mile radius around Haiphong to 4. Authorize armed reconnaissance through North Vietnam and coastal waters, except populated areas, the ChiCom buffer zone, and restricted areas.

2. Move the northern boundaries of the Sea Dragon area and the coastal armed reconnaissance area to 20°30'.

3. Mine inland waterways up to the ChiCom buffer zone as the Mark 36 destructors become available.

4. Restrike Hanoi TPP.

Study and report to President:

A. Casualties likely to result from attack on Red River Bridge.

B. State of repair and value of re-attack on other targets in Hanoi restricted area, notably following transport targets: the Van Dien Supply and Vehicle Depots, Hanoi RR Repair Ship, Yen Vien RR Classification Yards, Nguyen Khe Storage, and Kinh No Vehicle Repair.

C. Value of further narrowing of Hanoi and Haiphong restricted areas to, say, 8 nautical miles and 2 nautical miles, respectively.

Walt

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Memos to the President, 6/1–8/2/67, Vol. I. Top Secret. The notation “L” on the memorandum indicates that the President saw it.

246. Editorial Note

On July 17, 1967, the Special Committee of the Vietnamese Constituent Assembly, established to certify electoral slates, recommended that the Assembly reject the military ticket headed by Chief of State Nguyen Van Thieu and Prime Minister Nguyen Cao Ky and instead accept the opposition candidacy of former Head of State Duong Van Minh. According to telegram 1381 from Saigon, July 19, the man behind such political maneuvering was Ky himself, who envisioned using the challenge to the military as an excuse to dissolve the Assembly and divest his ticket of Thieu, which would again position Ky as the leading Presidential candidate. The next day, the top Vietnamese Generals, fearing that the crisis was "an American maneuver to bring in a civilian ticket," prevented the Assembly from voting against the Thieu–Ky candidacy. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S)

On July 18 Bui Diem, the Vietnamese Ambassador to the United States, then in Saigon, telephoned Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker to inform him that the military had concluded that it might have to engage in "some strong action" as a result of the Special Committee's recommendation. Bunker suggested that if they could not work out the situation with the Assembly, Thieu and Ky needed to "consider the possibility of stepping aside" in order to avoid the impasse. Bunker also warned that his government "absolutely would not countenance any sort of coup if that was what the military had in mind" by its statement. (Telegram 1409 from Saigon, July 19; *ibid.*, POL 27 VIET S; this telegram is printed in full in Pike, *The Bunker Papers*, pages 86–91) Additional analysis by the Embassy staff is also in telegram 1307 from Saigon, July 18. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S)

As a result of pressure from the Generals, the Assembly reversed the recommendation against the Thieu–Ky ticket late on July 18 and approved ten other candidacies, but disqualified the candidacies of seven opposition slates, including those of Minh and Au Truong Thanh, the leading peace candidate, on the grounds that Minh's running mate had once had French citizenship and that Thanh had Communist connections. In the aftermath, the Embassy was concerned by the action and suggested it would "leave political atmosphere somewhat tense and embittered." (Telegram 8796 from Saigon, July 18; *ibid.*, POL 27 VIET S)

247. Notes of Meeting¹

Washington, July 18, 1967.

[Here follows discussion relating to the Middle East, the Congo, and Latin America.]

On the matter of Viet Nam bombing policy, the President read a letter to the group from a man in Arizona and quoted such in saying that U.S. people do not think the U.S. is sincere in its desire to end the war. The letter said, "People believe that civilian heads have ignored the advice of the military." The President said he read the letter only because he believes it is symptomatic of what we will be facing on the Hill and around the country in coming months.

Secretary McNamara then reviewed targets which CINCPAC have recommended. Secretary McNamara said that there are 129 targets which have not been authorized, some of them in the 25 mile China buffer zone. Secretary McNamara said they are largely unimportant targets, many within the ten mile radius of Hanoi and some within the four mile circle of Haiphong. He said there is a very strong potential for civilian casualties if these targets are struck.

Secretary Rusk asked to look at the specific targets. Secretary McNamara provided him with a list and the Secretary said he would need until noon Wednesday before his judgment could be given. Secretary McNamara said the targets near the center of Hanoi are not worth the loss of a single U.S. plane or pilot. The Secretary said the military commanders in Viet Nam are interested in "free bombing."

The Secretary said twenty three targets would be proposed within the four mile center of Haiphong. The Secretary said if these targets are permitted, ships will be hit. The Secretary said he would recommend at least seventeen targets which are outside of the Hanoi–Haiphong perimeters except one MIG base, because the MIG base is heavily defended and the MIGs are of no threat to us at this point. There was a general discussion of the bombing strategy.

Secretary McNamara said, "Mr. President, your responsibility is to the people of this country. Whatever you feel we must do, let's do it."²

On the Taylor–Clifford mission, the President read a proposed draft of a message to be sent to the U.S. Ambassadors in the six other nations fighting with the U.S. in Vietnam.³

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings, 7/18/67. Literally Eyes Only. The meeting was held in the Cabinet Room from 6:06 to 7:30 p.m.

² On July 20 the execution of RT 57 began.

³ See Document 253.

The President made changes in the draft and returned it to Walt Rostow for editing and cabling.

The President then asked if a seven-nation Summit could be held in the Pacific before the Vietnam elections. Walt Rostow said he did not believe there should be one until “we have a government in Vietnam.” The President said, “We may need a Summit for them to win their elections.” No decision on this matter was reached.

248. Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (Bundy) to Secretary of State Rusk¹

Washington, July 18, 1967.

SUBJECT

General and Diplomatic Factors Affecting Bombing Policy

1. I have the general feeling that the North Vietnamese have been put under considerable strain by our bombing pressures since April. This is reflected in the [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] sensitive messages.² Perhaps stronger evidence is provided by a rather long domestic exhortation of late June, which came to our attention only last week, in which there was a strong suggestion of weaknesses in domestic performance and morale.

2. Hanoi must be disappointed at the lack of outcry, at least compared with their hopes, in US and world critical circles, since April. This, too, is supported by the sensitive [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] messages.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Bundy Files: Lot 85 D 240, Top Secret WPB Chron., Jun/Aug. 1967. Secret; Exdis. In a July 18 memorandum to Bundy, Hughes indicated that INR concurred with the views expressed in this memorandum. (Ibid., Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S)

² As reported in telegram 686 from Paris, July 13, Manac’h informed Embassy officers that Mai Van Bo had approached him on June 3 in order to request the French to take the initiative in starting negotiations. French officials told the Embassy that they had informed Bo that they would decline further involvement because they were not cognizant of the previous exchanges between Johnson and Ho. (Ibid.) In addition, Ha Van Lau, the DRV liaison to the ICC, told Manac’h his government would like to have the French intervene as a mediator in the war and propose a return to the Geneva Agreement of 1954. (Memorandum from Hughes to Rusk, June 16; *ibid.*, POL 27–14 VIET)

3. Hanoi is almost certainly just concluding some kind of review of the situation. The death of Nguyen Chi Thanh, however it happened, must have been a blow, and a loss to the hard-line faction.³ Ho himself has been little in evidence for some time, his only reported recent activity being to lay a wreath at Thanh's bier, although *not* to attend the funeral. It is at least plausible from all this that there is a broad strategic debate between "doves" and "hawks", although it seems most unlikely that Hanoi would move seriously toward peace. What seems much more likely is a tactical maneuver of some sort.

4. The deterioration in China seems steadily more marked, and has been reflected in extremist postures in Burma and Hong Kong. We all believe that Chinese behavior is less predictable than at any time in the past, which is one consideration. A second is that the Chinese situation must be worrying Hanoi. The North Vietnamese quite explicitly criticized Mao, without naming him, a month ago, and the Chinese have been notably silent toward Hanoi, except for an outburst of praise of Nguyen Chi Thanh. It seems overwhelmingly likely that there are significant Hanoi–Peking frictions.

5. The Soviets do not seem to have made any move whatever in the past three weeks. One can only surmise that they are watching Hanoi as closely as we are, and perhaps with a better sense of what is under way. Hanoi's total silence on the Glassboro meeting⁴ adds to the inference that they have been disturbed both by that meeting and by Soviet behavior in the Middle East, and this might mean that any increase in Soviet influence arising from the Chinese situation is balanced by a skepticism of Soviet firmness. The *major Soviet factor* appears to be avoiding any further attacks on shipping.⁵

6. There is no major pending visit or other event that need affect our diplomatic policy. Miki goes to Moscow this week, but with only a broad general picture of our thoughts and no specific message.

7. We really have no good indication what Hanoi might be cooking up. However, we have the intriguing CAS report of remarks in Stockholm calling for some sort of "signal", apparently even our refraining from bombing the dikes (as I read the report).⁶ The same re-

³ The DRV officially labeled Thanh's death as due to a heart attack on July 6. In an intelligence note to Rusk, July 13, Hughes noted INR's speculation that Thanh, a Politburo member in charge of COSVN, most likely died in the South during a U.S. bombardment in June. (Ibid., POL 15–1 VIET N)

⁴ See Documents 216 and 217.

⁵ See Document 188.

⁶ According to a July 13 memorandum from Hughes to Rusk, a Swedish Foreign Ministry official reported that at the Stockholm World Peace Council conference on Vietnam, two North Vietnamese representatives told him that a cessation "need not necessarily be declared unconditional," since a simple halt in the bombing would lead to negotiations that would begin "very soon" after such a pause. (National Archives and

port says that Hanoi is assuming we will hit the dikes, and the report at least has the backing of an Hanoi claim that we in fact did so on July 13—which we are checking. Apart from the normal sensitivity on the dikes, one might just see in these reports a fairly resigned attitude toward continued pressures in other respects.

8. Hanoi's reading of the McNamara mission and last week's announcements would be crucial,⁷ but we really have no indication. One can suppose that they would read the news from here as indicating that we were firm, although not ready to go up rapidly, and that we were putting more weight on the South Vietnamese.

9. Hanoi is doubtless encouraged by the attack on the Danang Air Base and the successful raid on Hoi An. It remains an open question whether their northern offensive is producing gains commensurate with the losses and degree of effort involved.

Conclusions

a. Broadly speaking, I think these factors argue against anything drastic at this moment, but are perfectly consistent with selected re-strikes as necessary even in sensitive areas. I continue to believe that the important thing is to create the impression of steady firmness, without a major shift in any direction. Whatever the debate in Hanoi, this seems the best way to affect it.

b. At this point, we should certainly avoid anything that gets us too close to the Chinese border in any respect. Apart from the question of Chinese reaction, this could tend to knit together Hanoi and Peking.

c. In the light of a possible early Hanoi maneuver, our plans should not be too fixed. Even if a public tactical maneuver were readily identified by us as just that, sharp bombing immediately after could set off hostile criticism that would encourage Hanoi.

Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET S) These encouraging remarks followed various signs for peace including the recall by the DRV of seven key representatives abroad and a statement by Trinh in an Austrian newspaper interview on July 2 that “there will be no difficulties” should the United States decide to seek a peaceful settlement. (INR Briefing Note, July 6; *ibid.*)

⁷ A reference to the President's July 13 news conference in which he, along with Westmoreland and McNamara, announced that, while not specifying any exact number, “some additional troops are going to be needed and are going to be supplied.” See *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1967*, Book II, pp. 690–696.

249. Memorandum From Vice President Humphrey to the Under Secretary of State (Katzenbach)¹

Washington, July 18, 1967.

As the Vietnamese election date approaches,² it is important that we be prepared to use our leverage in Vietnam to make certain that the much-advertised election in September can plausibly be regarded as a free and honest election.

If the military directorate is permitted to implement its plans to eliminate both Big Minh and the civilian candidate Au Truong Thanh, it is inevitable that public opinion in the United States—and probably in Vietnam—will have serious doubts about the integrity of the election.

It seems particularly unwise to permit the elimination of Au Truong Thanh, a genuine civilian candidate, not just another general, like Big Minh. No one here or in Vietnam believes that the man whom Ky personally appointed as Finance Minister two years ago is a Communist, since his record indicates the contrary. In his case, unlike that of Big Minh, there seems to be no possibility that he would win. Permitting a peace candidate to run would do much to convince people here that the election was an honest one and that the people of Vietnam were given a choice.

I understand that a final decision will be made on this within a few days. I suggest that we use our leverage—and despite what some may say we do have leverage over the military directorate—to prevent the military from disqualifying Thanh, and thereby discrediting the electoral process, and undermining our claim that a representative government will be elected in September through a free and honest election.³

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret.

² September 3 was the date of Presidential and Senatorial elections.

³ In his July 26 reply to Humphrey, Katzenbach noted that the disqualification of Thanh was already an accomplished fact; given the attitudes of Assembly members, attempts to dissuade the Assembly “were unsuccessful.” He remonstrated that the disqualification of Thanh and Minh did in fact occur at the hands of an elected body and also that the qualified candidates would “provide the electorate with a considerable choice.” (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S)

250. Telegram From the Station in Saigon to the Central Intelligence Agency¹

Saigon, July 19, 1967, 0846Z.

CAS 0208. Please pass following message to the President from Ambassador Bunker as a CAS supplement to Ambassador's weekly Presidential report.

1. In line with guidance received from the Secretary of State on 16 July,² a CAS officer has established an arrangement for continuing clandestine contact with [1½ lines of source text not declassified]. The case officer [less than 1 line of source text not declassified] has been in contact with Ky in connection with certain CAS operations against the Viet Cong since February this year. The purpose of the new arrangement, however, is to permit us to keep abreast of Ky's election campaign and to offer advice on how it can be conducted as cleanly as possible.

2. The contact between [less than 1 line of source text not declassified] and the CAS officer is completely clandestine. Ky instructed [less than 1 line of source text not declassified] to be absolutely frank with the CAS officer in discussing the Thieu/Ky campaign organization and its activities, as well as to listen to American suggestions on the conduct of the campaign. It was made clear [less than 1 line of source text not declassified] at the outset that Ky must work out his relationship with Thieu to their mutual satisfaction and campaign energetically within this framework, and further that the American advisory role is based on Thieu and Ky arriving at this understanding.

3. The relationship with [less than 1 line of source text not declassified] has already produced a valuable insight into the way in which Thieu and Ky are attempting to put together a campaign organization. Basically, it appears that Ky's supporters, who are numerous and effective politicians in comparison with the mere handful of Thieu's advisors, will do most of the work in organizing the campaign while placing Thieu designees in various key positions in the campaign organization which are visible to the public eye.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Intelligence File, Vietnamese (South) Elections 1967. Secret; Most Sensitive. Helms forwarded the telegram to the President on July 19. In his covering memorandum to the President, also July 19, Rostow wrote: "Herewith Amb. Bunker reports how he is proceeding to guide the Ky campaign. No U.S. funds are involved." (Ibid.) The notation "L" on the covering memorandum indicates that the President saw the telegram.

² See Document 242.

251. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, July 20, 1967, 0200Z.

1536. Ref: Saigon 1475.²

1. I had a talk with Prime Minister Ky late in the afternoon of July 20 and we went over some of the same ground that I had covered in my morning talk with General Thieu (reftel).

2. Ky gave me essentially the same explanation about the vote in the Assembly Special Committee that Thieu had given me (para 3 reftel). Ky then described the early morning meetings with corps commanders on July 18 along the lines described earlier by Bui Diem (Saigon 1381).³ Ky acknowledged that some of the Generals had given credence to the rumor that the Americans had been involved in the Special Committee action. He said he had told them this was ridiculous and they had calmed down in the course of the meeting. During that morning, according to Ky, checks with their people in the Assembly reassured them that the vote would be satisfactory. (*Comment:* This confirms Bui Diem's statement to me at our second meeting that same morning.)

3. I mentioned to Ky that we had heard that Loan felt the Americans were out to get him. I said that we, of course, had nothing against Loan himself although as I had myself said to Ky we felt that he had been overzealous early in the game and that this had not helped the situation either for the government or Ky. Ky said he had entirely agreed and had therefore pulled Loan back at that time.

4. We then got on to the matter of working arrangement between him and Thieu. Ky felt that this was moving in an encouraging way and said that he was in fact at the moment meeting with the entire Directorate to consider broad policy questions relating to reorganization of the RVNAF, pacification, formation of a Cabinet, and broad policy relating to negotiations for a settlement. He said these discussions were going well and that when they had reached a more definite state he would want to discuss them with me and also talk about the general division of work envisaged. He said that a statement regarding these policy matters would be issued August 3rd, the opening day of the campaign. Presumably it will constitute a Thieu-Ky platform.⁴

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 15-1 VIET S. Secret; Priority. Received at 11:06 p.m. and repeated to CINCPAC for POLAD.

² In telegram 1475 from Saigon, July 20, Bunker reported Thieu's explanation that the Special Committee of the National Assembly voted against the Thieu-Ky candidacy in order to "show its independence of the military." (Ibid.)

³ See Document 246.

⁴ The telegram has no signature.

252. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, July 22, 1967, 4:30 p.m.

Mr. President:

It may be useful if I set down for you some thoughts on the possibility of relative early negotiations to end the war in Viet Nam. I start, of course, on the assumption that this is a long shot; and, even more important, the only way to maximize the chance of an early end of the war is to proceed on the assumption that the war will last a long time.

Having said that, here are my thoughts.

1. The most important element that may be operating is the one on which we have least evidence; namely, the possibility that Hanoi now estimates that the U.S. election of November 1968 will not prove to be the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. On the basis of U.S. public opinion polls and the position of various Republican politicians—perhaps underlined for them by the Russians—they may now judge that, if the Republicans win, the military pressure on them will not decrease and might even increase. In that sense, Gen. Eisenhower's reported statement this morning² and other hawkish Republican statements work our way. It is possible also that positions taken by certain dovish Senators who indicated that they are not prepared to accept Hanoi's terms, may also be helpful; for example, Senator Pell's talk in Paris with Mai Van Bo.³

2. If this hypothesis is correct, they must rationally estimate the consequences of certain trends in the war not over an 18-month period, but over a period up to, perhaps, 5-1/2 years. Here are the trends they must then confront.

—The slow decline of the Viet Cong manpower pool—which has yielded stagnation or reduction in the size and effective strength of Viet Cong main force units and impairment of the Viet Cong infrastructure;

—As a result of the Viet Cong manpower situation, the need to insert into South Viet Nam increased North Vietnamese regular forces to keep the total Communist war effort in the south from collapsing under the weight of U.S. and Allied forces;

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Memos to the President, 6/1–8/2/67, Vol. I. Secret. The notation "L" on the memorandum indicates that the President saw it.

² In a Republican circular, Eisenhower expressed his view that the United States could not win a "war of gradualism." The former President suggested that Congress consider an official declaration of war. See *The New York Times*, July 22, 1967.

³ See footnote 2, Document 214.

—The increase in effectiveness of our bombing operations in North Viet Nam, notably against electric power and the transport system into and out of Hanoi and Haiphong, accompanied by a decline in the effectiveness of their air defenses and a marked reduction in our loss rates in aircraft and pilots;

—A rising requirement for foreign aid to Hanoi to compensate for the losses suffered through bombing—a trend which is increasing the leverage of the USSR and the Eastern European countries in Hanoi;

—Increasing anxiety about the difficulties inside Communist China and some lapping over into the Chinese population of North Viet Nam of the Red Guard movement.

3. I have spent some time reading literally hundreds of particular intelligence reports on the situation in the various provinces of South Viet Nam. They show, in different degrees, strain on Viet Cong morale and manpower; a weakening of military effectiveness; increased concentration on finding food and recruits rather than actual military operations; but no definitive break in the resilient Viet Cong structure.⁴

4. Similarly, as nearly as I can assess it, the bombing of North Viet Nam is hurting them, but not to the point of necessitating an early decision.

5. As recent public statements indicate (see, for example, attached)⁵ there is clearly a hard-line group in Hanoi prepared to persist; but the group may be growing, who believe that time is no longer their friend.

6. Therefore:

1. We should make every effort to increase the pressure on them: in the South and in the North.

2. Do not discourage the view that the Republicans may be even tougher: perhaps there are ways of quietly spreading this line in places it might get picked up—Paris, Moscow, etc.

3. Be prepared if they should approach us soon rather than late; but not be surprised if an approach is delayed, because governments tend to operate on urgent situations rather than projected trends—and they may have some time in hand before the situation becomes acute.

Walt

⁴ In a July 14 memorandum to Rusk, Hughes recounted tentative CIA analysis that desertions of NVA regulars in South Vietnam might be becoming a problem for Hanoi. CIA reported receiving isolated reports that suggested “a broadening of the base used to recruit men for the South.” The accession of less dedicated groups of recruits could mean further increases in the rate of NVA desertion. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, EA/VN Files: Lot 71 D 87, POL 1 July–Sept. 1967 NVN)

⁵ Not printed.

253. Editorial Note

From July 22 through August 5, 1967, General Maxwell Taylor and Clark Clifford, members of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, visited allied nations contributing troops to the war effort in Indochina, as well as South Vietnam itself. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs William P. Bundy discussed the nature of the mission in a memorandum of July 15. Although the official purpose of the trip was to consult the other member nations of the Manila Pact, Bundy acknowledged that a more vital yet privately-held aspect was to secure additional force contributions from these governments. Bundy noted the problem of public and international reaction to the U.S. Government's requests for military assistance from third countries. He suggested that the schedule might have to be adjusted in order "to avoid an impression of great urgency." (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Bundy Files: Lot 85 D 240, Top Secret WPB Chron., Jun./Aug. 1967) In a memorandum written 2 days earlier to Rusk, McNamara, Rostow, and Katzenbach, Bundy outlined the inherent difficulties in making such an approach. Careful consideration had to be taken, especially since additional contributions would open up the administration to charges of recruiting "mercenaries." Also, some governments, like that of the Philippines and the Republic of Korea, "could pay significant domestic political prices for new contributions." (Memorandum from Bundy to Rusk, McNamara, Rostow, Katzenbach, July 13; *ibid.*)

Telegram 9005 to Bangkok, Canberra, Manila, Saigon, Seoul, and Wellington, July 18, contained the text of a Presidential message that Taylor and Clifford would take to the leaders of Thailand, Australia, South Korea, and New Zealand, requesting their concurrence in the purpose of the mission. The message reads:

"I have now had the opportunity to review fully Secretary McNamara's findings from his recent visit to Vietnam, and I have sent you a summary of the highlights.

"In the meantime, it seems evident to me that Hanoi has been reviewing its position. While we think it unlikely that they have reached any serious decision in the direction of peace—and may indeed be headed in just the opposite direction—it seems entirely possible that we shall be confronted in the near future with some new tactical move. In any event, there is much to discuss concerning Hanoi's attitude, including the question of the possible effect in Hanoi of the apparent steady deterioration and increasing extremism in Communist China.

"In light of these developments, I have been giving thought to the need for full consultation among all the Seven Nations with forces in Vietnam. The April meeting of our Foreign Ministers was most helpful, but I believe we should plan on the next occasion to cover all the major strategic and diplomatic issues.

"Accordingly, I have asked my most experienced and trusted advisors, Mr. Clark Clifford and General Maxwell Taylor, to travel to Saigon for a review of the situation, and then to make their observations available to my colleagues in the capitals of the other nations with forces in Vietnam. Mr. Clifford and General Taylor have participated fully in our review here of the McNamara findings, and have been intimately associated over a long period with the whole situation. I repose the fullest trust and confidence in them.

"The fundamental purpose of the trip would be, then, interim consultation on all aspects of the Vietnamese problem.

"With the momentum we have achieved, it is more than ever vital to convince Hanoi that we mean to keep up the pressure. We must meet and defeat whatever Hanoi may do in the South, while continuing to deal effectively with thrusts across the border by North Vietnamese forces and with the infiltration routes and sources of supply in North Vietnam.

"The Vietnamese themselves fully recognize that they must do more, and General Westmoreland feels substantial additional need for external help. Accordingly, Messrs. Clifford and Taylor will be in a position to review these questions with you on a totally private basis as fully as possible, and to indicate the actions that we ourselves have in mind." (Ibid., Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S)

Additional documentation on the trip is *ibid.*, POL 7 US. Both Clifford and Taylor discussed their trip in a news conference at the White House on August 5. The text of their remarks is in *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1967*, pages 948–950.

254. Memorandum by the Chief of the Far East Division, Central Intelligence Agency (Colby)¹

Washington, July 25, 1967.

SUBJECT

Review of the Activities of the CIA's Vietnam Station

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Memos to the President, 6/1–8/2/67, Vol. I. Secret; Sensitive. The memorandum was the result of an inspection trip taken by Colby to the Saigon Station. On July 27 Helms forwarded the memorandum to the President, emphasizing that it reflected the fact that "this Agency is going flat out in its effort to contribute to the success of the total US program in Vietnam and is utilizing the full range of professional resources, skill and imagination available to us." (Ibid.) In his covering memorandum to the President of the same date, Rostow described it as "a heartening report" with a first paragraph that "gives the feel." (Ibid.) The notation "L" on the covering note indicates that the President saw the memorandum.

I. The Operating Climate

1. The impressions I obtained of the CIA Station's activities in Vietnam on this trip are significantly different from the impressions obtained on previous visits. During earlier periods, in looking at the Station one saw a harassed but imaginative band of officers wrestling with a variety of challenges and launching new programs in an effort to throw up some obstacles to slow the Viet Cong momentum and protect us from the fragility of the Saigon Government (the GVN). On this occasion, I saw a Station with a clear and important role in the overall American effort, working as a full and highly regarded member of a Country Team and possessing the initiative in the contest with the Viet Cong. The Station is still over-committed, but is efficiently structured to make a significant contribution for a force of its size.

II. Organization and Personnel

2. Some of the Station's programs in the past were remarkable innovations, unique in the quality of their execution. Yet since they were small, even though well polished, they were precious indications of future promise more than major contributions to a current war effort. That day is now over for several reasons, including the greater numbers of our Agency personnel now on the scene, the vast improvement of the Station's organization into regional groups under effective chiefs, and the fact that our officers are approaching programs as participants in a joint effort and as co-workers with their colleagues in other agencies, rather than as parochialists.

3. Today we have [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] American personnel on duty in Vietnam as members of the Vietnam Station. By contrast, there are around 460,000 US military in Vietnam, of which about 10,000 are intelligence personnel. AID's strength in Vietnam is about 2,000, the Embassy has about 230 people, and USIA about 120. Although in light of our total worldwide responsibilities it will be difficult to increase our career personnel input, our activities in Vietnam must and will be supplemented by the utilization of additional military and contract personnel in order to provide the manpower necessary to execute programs of the scope and variety of those in which the Station is engaged.

III. Principal Program Areas

4. *The Attack on the Communist Apparatus:* As the immediate military threat is pushed farther from the populated areas, it becomes ever more important to eliminate the Viet Cong apparatus (also known as the political control mechanism or infrastructure) in order to free the people of South Vietnam from the Communists' covert authority. The importance of this task has been underlined by Ambassador Komer

and is well recognized by the Station. The Station is hard at work collating our knowledge of the Viet Cong political structure at all levels in order to facilitate the identification and capture of key Communist cadre. The 7,000-odd low-level reports that we pass to our military colleagues each month now not only include order of battle type information on the strength and location of Communist military units but are including a steadily growing amount of intelligence on important Communist officials, i.e., their identities, functions and physical locations. This is a healthy sign. In this endeavor the Station is exploiting a variety of information sources including its [less than 1 line of source text not declassified] interrogation centers at both provincial and national levels, [less than 1 line of source text not declassified] (informants resident in contested hamlets), and a mass of detailed information received from around 5,000 Vietnamese who carry out the "Census Grievance" program. At the same time, some of our best officers are utilizing the most professional techniques in pursuing [less than 1 line of source text not declassified] covert operations aimed at key members of the enemy's highest level command structure in order to open channels of communication to individuals in this key target group so that we can tempt them to defect, persuade them to act as we would have them act or, at a minimum, sow doubts among them.

5. *Revolutionary Development*: The reorganization of the American Revolutionary Development effort has been a major step toward improving the control of US efforts in the "Other War," and will help to ensure that the programs of all US agencies will aim at concentrated objectives. The 24,000-odd Revolutionary Development cadre currently in training [less than 1 line of source text not declassified] constitute the foundation stone of this RD program. While these cadre are by no means perfect, their training, motivation and techniques have stimulated a series of efforts to emulate them and thereby extend their effectiveness or profit from the experience gained in developing the concepts which guide their activities. It is heartening indeed to see some of the results of this activity, to visit, for example, a Delta hamlet of 160 families with an elected council and a self-defense force of 78 young men, located in an area where only six months ago an RD team began its work with 12 families who lived there more or less under Viet Cong authority. It is even more heartening to see how many similar communities have been stimulated and supported and how these communities are succeeding in throwing off enemy domination. The Station has conclusively proved the importance of the cadre program to this "Other War." It has also shown that this program can be carried forward from local to area victories as has happened, for example, around Quang Ngai city. Two years ago Quang Ngai city was an urban island in a Viet Cong sea. Now, in its environs, the Viet Cong are being pushed southward and ever farther away.

6. *Political Intelligence and Action*: In the political field, Ambassador Bunker relies heavily on the judgment, initiative and professional tech-

niques of our Station and its officers. The Station is operating under his specific and detailed command and providing him the flexibility he needs in the delicate process of constitutional and electoral development. On the Ambassador's behalf we are developing discreet relationships and covert assets than can be manipulated to sponsor the emergence of what appear to the outside world as genuinely Vietnamese political initiatives, constitutional provisions and electoral platforms. This same network of relationships and assets will also help provide coverage of GVN political plans and intentions and early warning of political moves which would be counter to US interests.

7. *Other Programs*: While the manifold programs outlined above are massive by our Agency's standards, they do not comprise the whole of our Station's efforts. In addition to these programs, the Station is also carrying on other activities: it has developed and controls several sources reporting from [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*]; it has sponsored a team [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] showing a commitment to the Vietnam war by working with Vietnamese youth in the countryside. Through other Station programs, North Vietnam is being subjected to a variety of psychological pressures, including pressures from clandestine radios spreading defeatism and arousing fear of Mao's Red Guards.

IV. Major Problems

8. *The Police-Type Function of Civil Control*: I do not mean to suggest that all problems have been solved; many still remain. We still have not properly organized the essential police function, i.e., we have not established a police apparatus capable of eliminating the Viet Cong's covert control of the hamlets and keeping the Viet Cong away once they have been forced out. A major effort in this field is being built around Ambassador Komer's "Infrastructure Intelligence Coordination and Exploitation" (ICEX) organization which is largely based on a [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] proposal prepared at Ambassador Komer's request. ICEX is in its earliest stages and I do not think we have yet recognized the full scope of the staffing requirements that this Agency and the military will have to meet if the ICEX approach is going to work. Much needs to be done to improve the effectiveness and interaction of various Vietnamese components capable of taking direct action against identified infrastructure elements including the Police Field Forces, the Provincial Reconnaissance Units [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*], the regular police and the Regional and Popular Forces. Much work must also be done on extending the impact of Revolutionary Development teams in order to permit the coverage of a decisive percentage of the total population. Various tentative efforts are being made along these lines such as the "Quarter Zone" activity

in Binh Thuan province, the civil-military teams in Binh Dinh province, the hamlet self-defense elements and others; but both a conceptual and practical job still needs to be done in this vital area.

9. *Revolutionary Development Follow-Up*: It is also clear that some mechanism must be developed to ensure a proper follow-up of the special attention which has been provided by an RD team once the team leaves the hamlet in which it has been working, otherwise there is a pronounced tendency to fall back to earlier Vietnamese governmental failings which often contributed to produce the problem in that hamlet in the first place. This is primarily a job for Ambassador Komer, but the Station will certainly work closely with him in attempting to solve it.

10. *Needed Organizations and Political Institutions*: It is also plain that additional forms of popular organization, especially in the non-governmental field (e.g., trade unions and, eventually, political parties), must be developed in order to strengthen the fabric of Vietnamese society and render the Vietnamese capable of protecting themselves against Viet Cong probes, political as well as military. This is only one aspect of the fundamental problem of assisting Vietnam in its process of transition from government by mandarin or military authoritarianism to government based on an engagement of the people in a common endeavor. Again, this is an overall American problem but one to which the Station can contribute substantially through the political expertise of its own officers and through some of our [less than 1 line of source text not declassified] assets which, under Station direction, can extend their own [less than 1 line of source text not declassified] influence to help the Vietnamese in this difficult process of political evolution.

11. *The Top Level Communist Target*: Despite progress achieved, we still have far to go in upgrading our sources and in improving our production on the top policy levels of the Viet Cong, so that we can gain intelligence capable of providing the basis for strategic setbacks to the Communists in addition to providing accounts of the Communists' past activities.

V. Conclusions

12. In sum, though it appears to me that the war is by no means over and there are certainly fragile elements in the overall picture, it is very clear that my Soviet or Chinese counterpart's report must exhibit great concern over the Viet Cong's mounting problems and the steady improvement in the ability of both the South Vietnamese and the Americans to fight a people's war. My counterpart can quite properly ascribe a substantial share of responsibility for both Communist problems and anti-Communist improvement to the activities of our Vietnam Station.

255. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, July 26, 1967, 8:45 a.m.

Mr. President:

Herewith the report on Clifford–Taylor talks with Thieu–Ky.²

It includes:

—Reaffirmation of prompt 65,000 Vietnamese military manpower increase.

—Thang's request that we stop publicly criticizing pacification (problem is really inadequate ARVN security performance, not Thang's effort with special cadres, etc.).

—Ky's suggestion of pre-summit foreign ministers' meeting in Saigon and that Australia be considered for summit site.

—Ky's recommendation that summit be held in late October or November.

—Bui Diem's suggestion that Vietnamese assume some responsibility for asking for additional troops—and not leave job wholly up to U.S.

In addition, there is reference to a critical point for the future. Do, the Foreign Minister, notes that without a strong Vietnamese party structure, the NLF cannot be invited to shift from organized war to organized politics: they would be a "Trojan horse." When peace comes, the Communists certainly will take an organized role in politics, legally or otherwise; and, at the right time, the offer to do so may be helpful to a settlement.

Therefore, the build up of a large national non-Communist party in South Vietnam remains essential for political stability.

Walt

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Manila Nations Conference, Clifford–Taylor Trip, Aug. 1967. Secret; Nodis. A notation "L" on the memorandum indicates that the President saw it.

² Not printed. It is a retyped copy of telegram 1871 from Saigon, July 25, which reported on the meeting that day of Clifford, Taylor, Bunker, Westmoreland, and other officers of the Embassy with Thieu, Ky, and their principal advisers.

256. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, July 26, 1967, 1210Z.

1954. For the President from Bunker. Herewith my thirteenth weekly telegram:

A. General

1. Two developments of importance relating to the elections took place during the past week as the result at least in part of persistent persuasion and patient prodding on our part. The first was the lifting of press censorship which has encountered a very favorable reaction here. The second was the invitation sent by the Foreign Minister to U Thant urging that he send United Nations observers to Viet-Nam during the elections. In his letter the Foreign Minister expressed the view that the presence of such observers would clearly testify to the determination of the GVN to hold free and honest elections and that their presence would afford the United Nations organization an excellent opportunity to obtain a first-hand picture of what the situation in Viet-Nam really is. He has informed me that invitations are being sent to local diplomatic missions and to all countries in which the GVN has representation. These are both measures which I have been urging Thieu and Ky to take for some time and I think the fact that they have done so has given a feeling of considerable confidence to the civilian candidates and to the public generally.

2. Other actions which have contributed to the feeling of confidence are the promise of equal access for all candidates to communications media and transportation and the calling off of General Loan in his over-zealous activities on behalf of Ky's candidacy before the Thieu-Ky ticket was put together. Moreover within the past week both Thieu and Ky have said to me that they are fully conscious of the fact that with a combined military ticket they must take added precautions to see that the elections are clean.

3. At the meeting which Clark Clifford and Max Taylor had yesterday with Thieu, Ky and their colleagues,² Clark stressed the fact that

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Priority; Nodis. Received at 11 a.m. and passed to the White House at 7:30 p.m. In a covering note transmitting a retyped version of the telegram to the President, July 27, Rostow wrote: "This is the most solid piece of analysis in a single place of progress in Viet Nam. I believe it should be: —edited and repeated to our diplomatic posts; —used with the Congressional leadership." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 8 B (1)[A] Bunker's Weekly Report to the President) The notation "L" on the covering memorandum indicates that the President saw the telegram. This telegram is printed in full in Pike, *The Bunker Papers*, pp. 92-101.

² For a summary, see Document 255.

nothing could be more damaging to our common cause abroad than the impression that the elections were not honest. Thieu for his part said that they must be entirely honest and fair in order to show the Vietnamese people that the GVN really wants a democratically elected government which can defeat the enemy and promote a better life for its citizens. These are all constructive developments. But obviously the process will need watching and no doubt guidance as we get into the active campaign. I will of course continue to keep a sharp eye on this question and we will maintain the necessary pressure on the government.

4. The press of course will be watching the whole electoral process with a critical eye as they do almost everything here. It is a strange thing that in a country which is engaging in its first real experiment in democracy and under wartime conditions they seem to be expecting standards which have not yet been achieved in countries far more mature politically, even in the United States. Nevertheless it is typical of the cynical and skeptical attitude of a large part of the press here. This is a situation similar to that we faced in dealing with the Dominican problem where many of the press came with preconceived ideas and were not to be persuaded by the facts of life. The difference is that here it is on a bigger scale.

5. This came out at the brief press conference which Clark Clifford and General Taylor held on their arrival.³ A reporter for NBC here made the statement that pacification is not going well, that there had been no spectacular military victories, that ARVN does not show any signs of becoming an effective fighting force and later on in the course of the conference made even more damaging statements about ARVN, intimating that our field commanders do not trust the courage and loyalty of ARVN soldiers. Since I and my colleagues here are convinced that we have been and are making steady progress, I had assembled some factual data for Clark and Max Taylor detailing developments which have taken place in the military, political, economic and manpower areas, and the current status of the Viet-Cong. They felt that this information would be useful to them in their visits to the remaining six countries. Although I have covered some of these matters in my reports of recent weeks, it might not be amiss to summarize our views on the situation here as we see it.

Military Progress and Strategy in General

6. Our war against the main forces and guerrilla forces of the enemy has been going well. As evidence of this we have, during the past year:

³ See *The New York Times*, July 26, 1967.

A) Defeated enemy forces in battle wherever found and disrupted his plans for major offensive across the DMZ and in the highlands, denying him the psychological victory he seeks.

B) Contained the enemy along the Cambodia–Pleiku–Kontum border.

C) Reduced significantly enemy infiltration by sea, so as to force his reliance on infiltration through Laos and across the DMZ.

D) Increased security in the coastal areas of I and II Corps, dealing a major blow to guerrilla forces. This has disrupted the enemy's source of manpower and supplies in the area, forcing him increasingly to rely on Cambodia for supplies and North Viet-Nam for men.

E) Destroyed Viet Cong base areas north, west and east of Saigon, thereby pushing the enemy deeper into the jungles.

F) Significantly increased percentage of "secure" and "open" roads and waterways, including the opening of all major roads and waterways to daylight traffic in the vicinity of Saigon, the opening of Highway 1 along the central coast from Phan Rang to the DMZ except for a short stretch along the I Corps–II Corps boundary, and the keeping open of Highway 19 from the coast to the Highlands and Highways 21 and 14 in the Highlands, as required to support operations.

G) Improved the ratio of enemy killed to friendly killed and enemy weapons captured to friendly weapons captured.

In addition:

A) We have improved our intelligence and have developed a flexible logistical base. Port facilities are greatly improved.

B) New highly sophisticated weapons (bombs, mines, detection devices) have been developed, and some used with great success.

C) ARVN units dedicated to the main force war, while not consistent in their performance, have vastly improved as indicated by many battle victories, which were scarce a year and a half ago. Particularly have ARVN units fought well in joint operations with U.S. units, aided by U.S. artillery and air support.

7. However, the enemy still has capability of replacing troops and supplies, is giving troops better and more sophisticated weapons, has been able to mount destructive mortar and rocket attacks on our air fields and bases, and is determined to continue war, gambling on a changed political situation in the U.S. or South Viet-Nam.

8. We believe our future strategy should be

A) To continue, improve, and intensify our present tactics of (1) containing enemy main unit forces in the South Viet-Nam border area, (2) searching and destroying enemy forces within South Viet-Nam, (3) guarding our bases and devising better methods of combating rocket and mortar attacks against them, (4) destroying enemy base

areas, (5) interdicting infiltration of men and supplies into South Viet-Nam by the present kind of operations on land and sea and in North Viet-Nam, and (6) improving security in the countryside which is partly a function of all our other military activities.

B) To adopt whatever new tactics are necessary to stop or slow to a trickle infiltration by the enemy of men and material through Laos into South Viet-Nam.

Progress in the Political Field

9. Since early April of this year, most of the people in Viet-Nam in areas secure enough to hold elections have gone to the polls twice, once to elect village councilmen and the second time to elect hamlet chiefs. Local elections of this kind are important to the Vietnamese people because they restore to them the autonomy they once had, and provide an important base for the future involvement of the people in local government. They represent one of the present government's most significant reforms.

10. Eleven Presidential tickets and 48 10-man senatorial lists will be voted on in the September 3 elections. There are three major Presidential slates: (1) Chief of State Thieu and Prime Minister Ky; (2) former Prime Minister Tran Van Huong and respected southern Buddhist leader, Mai Tho Truyen; and (3) National Assembly Chairman Phan Khac Suu and Dr Phan Quang Dan. Senatorial contenders represent a broad cross section of Vietnamese non-Communist society and include many of Viet-Nam's most prominent political figures. This is a healthy sign of interest in the constitutional process and the importance attached to the forthcoming elections. As noted above the prospects for fair and honest elections have been much improved as have the prospects for post election cooperation between military and civilian elements. If, as we hope and believe probable, a broadly based military-civilian government can emerge from the elections, it will be a long step forward in creating public confidence in and support for the government. This in turn should provide increased stability and a broader base for carrying forward the activities of government in all areas. Progress toward the development of a democratic constitutional process has been a major achievement and one which will have great psychological impact both in Viet-Nam and abroad.

[Here follows discussion of the favorable economic outlook; problems in the countryside; manpower issues; pacification; the July 25 conversation among Bunker, Clifford, Taylor, Ky, and Thieu; the upcoming Vietnamese political campaign; and figures for Chieu Hoi and killed-in-action.]

Bunker

257. Memorandum From the Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs, Central Intelligence Agency (Carver) to Secretary of Defense McNamara¹

Washington, July 26, 1967.

SUBJECT

The Attack on the Communist (Viet Cong) Organization and Its Supporters, Particularly at the Village and Hamlet Level

1. The mainspring of the Communist insurgency in South Vietnam is the Communist organization, built around an elaborate, interlocked hierarchical structure of controlling committees ranging from COSVN (the Central Committee of the "People's Revolutionary Party," the name the Communist Party uses in South Vietnam), through six regional committees, (Communist) province committees and their subordinate district committees to the Communist village committees. Collectively, this committee structure and the personnel who staff its various components are referred to as the Communist organization, apparatus or "infrastructure." The term "infrastructure" is often misleading, however, since it is sometimes employed in a technical sense to denote members of this committee structure, which stops at the village level, and sometimes in a non-technical generic sense to denote all VC activists, adherents or sympathizers many of whom, of course, reside in hamlets or elsewhere throughout the countryside.

2. As I indicated in our conversation on the return trip from Vietnam, the formal attack on the Communist organization—as a structured bureaucratic entity—is perforce targeted at village level and above, and this is why the briefing we were given on CORDS/ICEX had this focus. The general attack on the Communist target, however, obviously has to go below the village to the hamlet and population-mass level.

3. To support this general attack, the CIA Station in Vietnam has developed five programs, two of which are specifically aimed at the hamlet and population-mass level target. These programs are:

- a. The Hamlet Informant Program
- b. The Census Grievance Program
- c. The systematic interrogation of captured or defected Viet Cong
- d. Agent penetrations of the VC organization
- e. The Provincial Reconnaissance Units

¹ Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OSD Files: FRC 72 A 2468, Vietnam 380 Pacification (Jul–) 1967. Secret. A stamped notation, dated August 19, indicates that McNamara saw the memorandum.

4. *The Hamlet Informant Program*: Within a rural community, there is very little that goes on that does not become a matter of common knowledge to members of that community. In Vietnam, this means that hamlet residents and villagers recruited as secret informants are able to report on the identities of Viet Cong cadre and sympathizers (village and district committee members, propagandists, tax collectors, etc.), and on members of local guerrilla forces. In 1964, in conjunction with Police Special Branch elements at province and district headquarters, the CIA Station undertook a program for systematically recruiting such informants in hamlets programmed for "pacification." Informant reports provide identification and biographic information on individual VC and frequently include sketches of their location within a hamlet. Informants are also able to produce low-level, low-grade tactical information (for example, early warning information). Reports are disseminated at sector level and district level. Over four thousand informants have been recruited (throughout South Vietnam) under this program and their activities produce around four thousand reports each month.

5. *The Census Grievance Program*: The Census Grievance Program, also begun in 1964, is a specialized program, the main overt purposes of which are to assist Province Chiefs in determining the political sympathies of the province population and to establish a mechanism for the articulation of aspirations and redress of grievances. A covert purpose and an important product of the program is to develop information from hamlet residents and villagers on the local VC organization and activities. The product is very similar to that obtained from the above described Hamlet Informant Program.

6. The Census Grievance Program is implemented through the use of one or two man units established in accessible hamlets. A person-by-person census is conducted in each such hamlet and the local Census Grievance unit uses the data collected in continuous regular interviews of each hamlet family. These units are directly responsible to the Province Chief and they provide him with an instrument through which popular grievances and aspirations can be ascertained. The Census Grievance cadre, in the course of these interviews, produce a large volume of infrastructure and tactical information on the Viet Cong which is disseminated immediately to local users. As of 1 June 1967, approximately 4,000 Census Grievance units with about 5,250 cadre, were providing information on VC personnel, installations, caches, etc. These units (one to a hamlet) produce about 1,800 reports per month. Their activity, despite the similarity in nomenclature is separate from that of the Census Grievance components of RD teams, which also produce intelligence of this nature.

7. *Province Interrogation Centers (PICs)*: Inadequate exploitation of captured, arrested and defected Viet Cong led our Vietnam Station (in

the summer of 1965) into undertaking the construction and operation of interrogation facilities in the provinces. This program, developed in conjunction with the Vietnamese Police Special Branch, now has 33 PICs in operation (seven more will be completed at an early date). The purpose of each PIC is to provide in-depth interrogation reports from VC prisoners and ralliers on biographic information of VC known to them in their villages and hamlets, to include a sketch of the location of the individual's domicile. (In theory, local forces will then act upon this information by raids and capture of identified members of the Communist organization.) In addition to personality information, prisoners are immediately interrogated for any information that is of immediate tactical interest to local US or GVN military or paramilitary forces. They are later debriefed in depth on their knowledge of the VC political apparatus, its plans and its policies. The individual interrogation reports are distributed to Vietnamese US/Free World Forces at district, province and higher echelons, as appropriate.

8. Outside of its interrogation function, each of the PICs also has a collation section into which interrogation reports are deposited along with intelligence reports from other Vietnamese intelligence organs. Biographic cards are filed alphabetically by hamlet, village, district and province as are reports broken down by specific topics such as "VC Taxation," "VC Security Apparatus," etc. The biographic material is readily retrievable for the preparation of "black lists" of identified VC to support military and pacification operations. The cards are cross-indexed to individual biographic interrogation reports giving additional details.

9. *Agent Penetration Operations*: In conjunction with both the Police Special Branch (PSB) and the Field Operations element of the Central Intelligence Organization (CIO), our Station runs joint agent penetrations of the Viet Cong apparatus. These operations, directed against the People's Revolutionary Party and the National Liberation Front, involve agents located, for the most part, in village and district Viet Cong committees. These operations produce a substantial amount of information useful tactically by military elements, and also produce a large volume of intelligence on Communist cadre, information on political and economic activities, etc. An average of 1,000–1,200 reports are produced and disseminated monthly as a result of these operations.

10. *Province Reconnaissance Units (PRU)*: PRU teams, whose primary functions are to gather intelligence on and conduct special operations against the VC organization, are currently operating in 28 provinces under the direct cognizance of the Province Chiefs. The PRUs operate mainly in contested areas and in VC-controlled areas (usually at night) against identified Communist officials. In areas where heavy military action is underway, the teams are frequently used for military reconnaissance purposes. In the six months ending 30 April 1967, the PRUs

conducted 1,658 operations, from which 2,340 reports were produced. A total of 814 VC captured in these operations provided substantial information on the VC organization, from hamlet to province level.

11. *Inter-Agency and Combined Intelligence Activities*: In addition to the above programs, we are engaged in a series of other activities against the Communist organization which are undertaken on a combined and/or joint basis with MACV and the GVN:

a. *District Operations Intelligence Coordination Centers (DOICC)*: During the latter part of 1966, our Station undertook the creation of district coordination centers, and established several prototypes in I Corps. These centers, established with the cooperation and support of the US Marine units in the area, include participation of all Vietnamese intelligence collection agencies operating locally. The purpose of the centers is to break down the mutual jealousies and poor coordination practices of the Vietnamese agencies, to function as information clearing houses and collation centers, and to eliminate delays in dissemination of information. This concept has proven successful and is now being applied in many districts throughout Vietnam.

b. *Combined MR IV Task Force*: This organization was established in December 1966 to provide an intelligence collation and coordination center for the VC Military Region IV (Saigon, Cholon, Gia Dinh, and immediate environs). It is staffed by Vietnamese, MACV, and CIA personnel and data collected is incorporated in the MACV machine records repository for prompt retrieval. We understand that this concept is being expanded into II Corps.

c. *Screening Operations*: In conjunction with the Vietnamese Police Special Branch, our Station organizes support for combat units in screening detainees and refugees, mainly in the various cordon and search type operations. Mobile screening centers have been created to facilitate this support. Police Special Branch develops suspect lists from information from all of the foregoing programs, and provides interrogation and check-point support for military units. These techniques have succeeded in identifying numerous Viet Cong detained in the course of operations, and have the effect of denying the VC the ability to hide among the population.

d. *Infrastructure Intelligence Coordination and Exploitation Structure (ICEX)*: This new staff structure is designed to bring all the foregoing programs, as well as a number of MACV programs, under the operational control of Deputy to COMUSMACV for CORDS (Ambassador Komer) and into an integrated and sharply-focused attack on the VC organization. ICEX coordinators (CIA Regional Officers) have been appointed to the staffs of Senior Corps Advisors, and to the staffs of Sector Advisors (CIA or MACV officers), in order to achieve unified line of command and a sharp stimulation of anti-infrastructure operations.

12. *Conclusion:* In short, though much remains to be done, there are programs already in operation directed against the hamlet and population-mass level Communist target in addition to existing or newly developed programs directed against the formal organizational structure whose lowest command unit is the village committee.

GW Allen²

² George Allen signed for George Carver above Carver's typed signature.

258. **Memorandum From the Minister-Counselor for Political Affairs of the Embassy in Vietnam (Calhoun) to the Deputy for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (Komer)¹**

Saigon, July 27, 1967.

SUBJECT

Coping with Corruption

REFERENCE

Your Memorandum of July 6, this Subject²

1. I have read with interest your suggestions to the Inter-Agency Committee on Corruption for the collection of information on GVN officials who are believed, but not proven, to be corrupt, on the basis of which American advisors would refuse all but minimum contact and cooperation. The Committee's reply has been discussed with me and I have also noted General Lansdale's thoughtful comments on this matter.³

2. I agree that the level of corruption in Viet-Nam has reached a point where, as you point out, it has become a key obstacle to pacifica-

¹ Source: Center for Military History, DepCORDS/MACV Files, GVN Corruption 1967. Secret; Noform.

² In this attached July 6 memorandum to the Chairman of the Embassy's Corruption Committee, Thomas Dunlap, Komer suggested blacklisting GVN officials believed to be engaged in corruption and then instructing U.S. advisers to avoid them. By this mechanism, the identified individuals would "lose face."

³ Lansdale's July 21 memorandum to Komer, Calhoun, and Dunlap noted the opportunity presented to address the corruption issue by a provision in the new Constitution for an "Inspectorate." He argued that this organization should be encouraged and strengthened by the Mission. (Ibid.)

tion. We must find a way to reduce it, and we must act more vigorously than we have done. General Lansdale has addressed himself to some of the steps we might consider in the coming weeks to encourage and assist responsible elements within the GVN to seize the opportunities offered by the new governmental framework to act against corrupt elements. This point was touched upon briefly in the Committee's reply. I think we ought also to look more carefully at what we Americans can do to reduce the incentives and opportunities for corruption. Among these measures might be the relocation and careful control of bars and brothels frequented by Americans, and the reduction of piaster expenditures by civilian as well as military personnel. The restoration of "sign-off" or veto authority over the distribution of USAID commodities to American Provincial Advisors would seem desirable, although I understand from USAID that we may have to seek Congressional action to make "sign-off" meaningful. I believe we must keep our concern over corruption continuously before GVN officials at the highest level.

3. The discreet collection of credible although unproven reports about corrupt GVN officials as suggested by you and agreed upon by the Committee may prove useful and I am quite agreeable to its compilation by the Committee.

4. I think it is evident, however, that the uses to which this information might be put, as well as the means which would be necessary to verify much of it, raise fundamental questions concerning the relationship of our Government with the GVN. As the Committee points out, in order to effect rapid reduction in corruption the United States would have to acquire, and be willing to exercise, at least the power to veto appointments of Province Chiefs and ARVN officers of divisional commander rank and responsibility. The assumption of such sweeping prerogatives entails an invasion of the sovereignty of the Republic of Viet-Nam so great that it could and would be argued thereafter that United States is indeed the neo-colonialist power its critics and enemies allege it to be.

5. Our policy in Viet-Nam has been and is based on different, indeed quite contrary, premises. We have believed that self-determination is good for the Vietnamese people and that the exercise of control by outsiders is bad; we have believed that lasting changes for the better in Vietnamese society must be brought about by the Vietnamese themselves, with our aid, encouragement, and prodding, but not at our discretion. I believe that the more representative government which is emerging in Viet-Nam must be the vehicle for eliminating the social evils which beset the people. I do not think we can or should do this job for them.

6. It may be argued that there are many Vietnamese who, despairing of the present situation, would welcome our taking over. Al-

though I recognize that there are some Vietnamese who feel that way, and that among them are able and dedicated patriots, I do not believe that most Vietnamese do. The majority would detest us for such a take-over and our enemies would benefit by exploiting this feeling.

7. I might add that it is my opinion that even if we should wish to assume such sweeping powers, I doubt our ability to exercise them effectively. Our personnel are not trained nor our people motivated to carry out the police and administrative functions the assumption of such sovereign power would entail.

8. I believe the Committee has accurately defined the degree of control which the US would have to exercise to effect a rapid and dramatic reduction in the level of corruption in Viet-Nam. I do not think it would be wise for us to seek such control.⁴

⁴ In a memorandum of July 27 to Komer, the Committee responded at length to the concerns raised in his July 6 memorandum. For any measures against corruption to be effective in the short term, the Committee concluded that "a major change in the relationship between the United States Government and the Government of Viet Nam would be necessary." The necessary "leverage" in order to ensure progress would involve U.S. Mission veto power over the appointment of province chiefs and division commanders. The "blacklist" concept was adopted, although any such findings would be termed instead "incident reports." (Ibid.)

259. Memorandum of Meeting¹

Washington, July 28, 1967, 3 p.m.

PARTICIPANTS

Mr. E. Rostow
Gov. Harriman
Mr. Hughes
Mr. Habib
Mr. Read
Mr. Cooper

Mr. Habib provided a run-down of the South Vietnamese elections. Habib stressed that our Mission in Saigon was well aware of the importance of a fair election, and he cited some favorable omens (such as the new Press law) which should offset the impression that the elec-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Top Secret; Exdis. Drafted by Cooper. The meeting was held in Harriman's office.

tions would be fixed. Habib felt that General Ky's reference to a possible coup was another case of Ky's poor public relations. There was a brief discussion of whether Security Chief Loan should be removed from Vietnam during the course of the election campaign; on balance, it was felt that we should not press for this.

Mr. Read and Mr. Habib described the present state of play with respect to negotiations. There was little new or solid. Many of the North Vietnamese Ambassadors who had gone to Hanoi had not yet returned to their posts. Current active channels were the contacts between the Swiss Ambassador and the North Vietnamese Ambassador in Warsaw (we will know more about this during the week);² the possible reestablishment of the contact between the Japanese and North Vietnamese Ambassadors in Moscow;³ and the unfinished conversation between the Norwegian and North Vietnamese Ambassadors in Peking.⁴ Nothing further has been heard from the two unofficial French representatives who went to Hanoi. (Cooper will pursue this with Kissinger.)⁵

There was some discussion with respect to the significance of the withdrawal of some North Vietnamese units into North Vietnam from the area around the DMZ. It was agreed they would prepare a suggestion to the Secretary that the Russians be queried in a low key as to the significance of the withdrawal. (I have since been informed that the Secretary had already put the question to Dobrynin in conversations during last week. As yet there has been no reply.)

Cooper gave a brief run-down on the meeting of IDA consultants at Falmouth on the barrier. He outlined a brief scenario as to how the barrier might be used in connection with negotiations.

Governor Harriman stressed the need to prepare to move forward on the negotiations front following the GVN elections. He also stressed the need to keep all contacts with the Soviets alive and active.⁶

² DRV Ambassador to Poland Do Phat Quang tried to find out from his Swiss counterpart what the U.S. Government was "actually thinking" about contacts with his government. (Telegram 9112 from Warsaw, July 19; *ibid.*, POL 27 VIET S)

³ From July 1966 through January 1967, the Japanese Ambassador in Moscow met with the DRV Ambassador to discuss a formulation to end the war in Vietnam. The contacts terminated when the DRV Ambassador left Moscow. (Telegrams 111909 and 118870 to Tokyo, January 3 and 14; both *ibid.*, POL 27-14 VIET) With the arrival of a new DRV Ambassador in May, the U.S. Embassy attempted to re-open contacts. (Telegram 197426 to Tokyo, May 18; *ibid.*) In a conversation on July 10, Bundy briefed the Japanese Ambassador to the United States, Shimoda, on acceptable terms for ending the hostilities in preparation for Prime Minister Miki's visit to Moscow (as did Kohler on July 18). (Memoranda of conversation, July 10 and 18; both *ibid.*, POL 27 VIET S) Additional documentation on this contact is *ibid.*, POL JAPAN-VIET N.

⁴ See Document 201.

⁵ See Document 263.

⁶ Harriman made this suggestion to Rusk in a July 28 memorandum. (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Harriman Papers, Special Files, Public Service, Confidential File, July 1967 General)

260. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, July 29, 1967, 0816Z.

2016. 1. In a talk which Calhoun and I had with Bui Diem July 28, I asked him about the way things were going between Thieu and Ky. Bui Diem said that he thought their personal relationship was improving and that they were working together quite well on the campaign and related matters. When I pressed him, he said he foresaw some future problems, particularly after a new government is formed, in the role of the military leaders. He said a collegiate form of control was emerging among the top military leadership and that the latter would seek to continue this control if Thieu and Ky were elected. He did not know what form this might take, but was worried about its relationship to broader civilian-military cooperation and to the Constitution.

2. In this connection Bui Diem said that they were still attempting to spell out more clearly the understanding between Thieu and Ky regarding the division of responsibilities.²

Bunker

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 15–1 VIET S. Secret; Exdis. Repeated to CINCPAC for POLAD.

² In telegram 2105 from Saigon, July 29, Bunker reported more on this conversation. He confronted Bui Diem about Ky's offhand remark about resorting to a coup in the event of unfair elections, and sternly repeated his previous warning that "we could not contemplate any such action as a coup." (Ibid.)

261. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, July 31, 1967, 10:30 a.m.

Mr. President:

On bombing and retaliation.

The Communists are using mortars as their equivalent to our

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Memos to the President, 6/1–8/2/67, Vol. I. Secret. The notation "L" on the memorandum indicates that the President saw it.

bombing in the North. Like them, we have hit airfields, barracks, and military installations. These mortar attacks are particularly attractive to them at a time when Viet Cong capabilities have somewhat diminished to make conventional guerrilla attacks.

The question is, therefore, what additional targets might we add which hurt them and made military sense, in retaliation for their increased use of mortars.

I surveyed the possibilities over the week-end.

Here, in order of priority, are some possibilities.

—*Phuc Yen and Gia Lam airfields.* These are MIG bases and Gia Lam is an international airport, similar to the one attacked near Saigon.

—*Red River bridge.* A mile long. With special care should be attackable without significant civilian casualties. Fits the transport offensive now being mounted.

—*The three Hanoi radio stations.* The military case is not strong; although they are the source of vicious propaganda throughout Southeast Asia, including Northeast Thailand. They are all out in the country and would involve virtually no civilian casualties. (I, personally, have always thought pretty well of these targets because radio Hanoi is a symbol of the regime's power and regional pretensions. Some of the Intelligence people say they would miss the broadcasts as a source of information.)

—*Ministry of National Defense.* They have struck quite close to the MACV compound. We're not sure they meant to attack. But an attack on the Ministry of National Defense would bring the war home to some of the military bureaucrats.

Hanoi TPP is ripe for re-attack when other conditions are ripe; but having been attacked before would not be a sign of our upping the ante in retaliation for mortar attacks on us.

Finally, you should know the Air Force is presenting a plan to Bus Wheeler for cutting the transport lines more systematically around Haiphong and seeking to slow down supply movements more effectively. A quite serious and interesting proposal. No attacks on ships involved.²

Walt

² According to a July 31 memorandum from Ginsburgh to Rostow, Wheeler generally concurred with the Secretary of the Air Force's plan, SM-519-67, July 26, which called for the increased concentration of bombing on LOCs (Alternative C in Brown's recommendations) and a lifting of restrictions on target areas. (Ibid., Misc. Memos, Vol. 2B)

262. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, August 1, 1967, 10:15 a.m.

Mr. President:

Fritz Hollings² called me. Having spent a vacation in South Carolina next door to him two years ago, we are friends.

He reported as follows.

He is very worried about the mood on Viet Nam among the men whose support you really need in the Senate for Viet Nam—in particular, Senators Russell, Stennis and Byrd. He says the mood is affected by stories of the Marines getting ambushed in the DMZ, damage to the carrier, and a general feeling that we are on a treadmill in Viet Nam. Dick Russell's view is that we should "declare war or get out." Stennis', that we are vastly overcommitted and that we are fighting at the level "the enemy dictates."

He says this mood of frustration lies behind the support for Fulbright's resolution.³

I said that there were two facts as seen from the Executive Branch:

—In the wake of McNamara's trip we have never had the Saigon and Washington teams so completely agreed that in military terms we were making good progress; we could see a process under way that really gave light at the end of the tunnel; and, in fact, our greatest anxiety and caution was the Vietnamese election.

—In substance, what was happening was that the manpower pool under the control of the Viet Cong in the South was being run down slowly but surely, and the North Vietnamese could not or would not put in enough forces across the DMZ or otherwise to divert effectively U.S. forces from maintaining effective pressure on the Viet Cong, along with the South Vietnamese, the Koreans, etc. The North Vietnamese have had to withdraw from I Corps the units which had been fighting there for rest and refit after their engagements with Marines.

I concluded that in fact we were on a winning track if we had the capacity to sweat it out.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Memos to the President, 6/1–8/2/67, Vol. I. No classification marking. The President wrote on the memorandum: "To McNamara for action with 3 Sen[ators] involved." Another handwritten note indicates that McNamara received the report by telephone.

² Senator Ernest F. Hollings (D-SC).

³ On July 31 Fulbright submitted a resolution requiring Senate assent to "national commitments" to foreign nations.

He said it was extremely important that we conveyed all the evidence for this view to these key Senators.⁴

Walt

⁴ According to notes by Rostow, at the weekly foreign policy luncheon of August 1, Nitze was given the task of gathering the necessary "evidence" to persuade Hollings' Senate colleagues on an informal basis. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Walt Rostow, Meetings with the President, July through December 1967)

263. Editorial Note

On August 1, 1967, Henry A. Kissinger, a Harvard University professor of government and part-time consultant to the Johnson administration, submitted a memorandum reporting the opening of a new channel of contact with the North Vietnamese regime that would become known as Pennsylvania. At the Pugwash conference of international scholars, held in Paris in June, Herbert Marcovich, a French biologist and long-time acquaintance of Kissinger, proposed an unofficial visit to Hanoi in order to further the cause of peace. Marcovich proposed to travel with Raymond Aubrac, a director in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and a man well-known to Ho Chi Minh and Pham Van Dong. Based upon discussions with Ambassador at Large W. Averell Harriman and his aide, Chester Cooper, Kissinger briefed Marcovich in late June and early July on the negotiating position of the U.S. Government, particularly emphasizing the need for a "quid pro quo" from Hanoi in response to an end to the bombing. Although stressing his own private citizen status, Kissinger promised to report any result of the effort to Washington.

Marcovich and Aubrac traveled to North Vietnam July 21–26, and they met once with Ho Chi Minh and twice with Pham Van Dong. At a July 24 meeting with Pham Van Dong, they informed him of their informal arrangement with Kissinger as a conduit to the U.S. Government and presented a two-stage proposal for opening peace talks that involved a halt to bombing in conjunction with North Vietnam's assurance that "the rate of supplies should not increase under this step." Dong responded: "We want an unconditional end to the bombing and if that happens, there will be no further obstacle to negotiations." The cessation did not have to be officially declared as long as it simply occurred; a "de facto" stoppage was acceptable. Marcovich and Aubrac came away believing that negotiations would follow the termination of bombing "within a matter of days." The next day, Dong again em-

phasized that although he preferred a public statement from the United States declaring that bombing would end unconditionally, none was necessary. Dong even conceded that some U.S. troops would have to remain in South Vietnam until a political settlement evolved, and he reiterated his government's desire to not impose socialism on the South, where a broad coalition government could include members of the present regime. There would be no delay in negotiations once the bombing ended.

When they returned to Paris on July 28, Marcovich and Aubrac briefed Kissinger fully on their meetings. Kissinger advised them to inform Mai Van Bo and Vo Van Sung, top North Vietnamese diplomats in Paris, of their talk with him. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA)

An August 2 synopsis of the beginnings of the contact by Chester Cooper and part of Kissinger's report are reprinted in Herring, *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pages 717–725. Additional documentation on Pennsylvania is in the National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, S–AH Files: Lot 71 D 461, Kissinger Project; *ibid.*, Bundy Files: Lot 85 D 240, Kissinger 1967; and Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Pennsylvania.

264. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, August 2, 1967, 1330Z.

2289. For the President from Bunker. Herewith my fourteenth weekly telegram:

A. General

1. At the end of last week I had talks with both Thieu and Ky on a variety of subjects but especially concerning various aspects of the forthcoming elections.²

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Priority; Nodis. Received at 3:45 p.m. Rostow sent a copy of the telegram to the President on August 3. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 8 B (1), Bunker's Weekly Report to the President [1 of 2]) The notation "L" on the covering memorandum indicates that the President saw the telegram. This telegram is printed in full in Pike, *The Bunker Papers*, pp. 102–110.

² Bunker's discussion with Thieu is reported in telegram 2082 from Saigon, July 30, and his discussion with Ky in telegram 2029 from Saigon, July 30. (Both in National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S)

2. Ky said that he felt preparations were going ahead well and was pleased that unanimous agreement had been reached among all the candidates regarding use of radio and television facilities, transportation, and joint meetings throughout the country in which all candidates would participate. He remarked that a few protests, with some threats to boycott the elections, had been made by some of the Cao Dai and militant Buddhists whose tickets had been rejected. He did not, however, envisage a situation which could not be satisfactorily handled, and observed that members of the Cao Dai as well as Buddhists were scattered through all the tickets. He expressed some concern about the ability of voters to choose among the great number of Senate candidates and confirmed his intention to tie in about six Senate lists to the Thieu-Ky slate so that the voters could identify them as allied with their ticket. He expressed the hope that other candidates might follow a similar course.

3. I raised with both Thieu and Ky a suggestion that they encourage a number of qualified Viet Cong ralliers to present themselves as candidates for the lower house elections noting the advantages that this might offer in promoting the GVN's national solidarity program. Both agreed that this was a useful idea and could provide further incentive to both the Chieu Hoi and Doan Ket programs. Thieu observed that there might be a problem in finding qualified men since most of the ralliers were relatively uneducated, but said that he would nevertheless pursue the matter. He rather shared Ky's doubts that disgruntled Cao Dai or the extreme Buddhists would be able to create trouble which could not be readily handled. He thought instead they would work "underground" advising people to vote against the military ticket and probably favoring Phan Khac Suu as being a benevolent figure more favorable to their interests, with the added prestige of age and white hair. Thieu gave an interesting description of the importance of age not only in terms of political support, but also in pacification, and indeed the whole realm of bringing the country, especially the villages, into the modern age of science and technology. He stressed the importance of taking into account the prestige and influence of elders on the attitudes of the villagers. The Communists in the beginning had failed to recognize this and as a result had had numerous failures. Thieu said the most effective way for the government to instill new ideas, for example with respect to pacification, was first to convince the elders who in turn would then be able to influence the younger elements to adopt them and put them into effect.

4. In response to my question about the platform and campaign plans for the Thieu-Ky ticket, he said they proposed to handle the campaign in a rather low key fashion. Their ticket had certain inherent advantages especially in meeting popular desires for stability, continuity, and security which the military element can best provide. At the same

time, the armed forces would be considered among the strongest proponents of peace since they were the heaviest sufferers from war. He added that obviously a large measure of military support would accrue to the ticket also and they would not wish to appear to be exerting pressure on either the armed forces or provincial and district chiefs. He planned to state this clearly and publicly again.

5. In discussing the Senate lists, Thieu commented on the complexity of the problem for the average voter and confirmed Ky's statement about affiliating six slates with their own ticket. He stressed the importance of the executive and legislative branches working together in wartime. I noted that there had been a number of protests about upper house lists which had been disqualified and observed that the U.S. press had been quite critical. Thieu said he recognized this and that he was reviewing these protests personally. He said that so far his conclusion was that the disqualifications were justified on the grounds given.

6. A matter which has been of considerable interest to us has been the status of the Statut Particulier drafted by a Congress of Montagnard representatives under the chairmanship of General Vinh Loc in order to meet some of the aspirations and concerns of the FULRO, most of whom are now in Cambodia, and other Montagnard tribes. Ky announced at the end of June that the Statut would be promulgated and the intention of the government to set up a Ministry for Montagnard Affairs, but no action has been taken. I brought up the matter with both Thieu and Ky. Thieu said he was presently examining the Statut, that he thought it was in order and conformed to the Constitution and proposed to promulgate it in August at a ceremony in Pleiku or Banmethuot. This should be helpful in stimulating the return of the approximately 2,000 to 3,000 FULRO now in Cambodia and giving the Montagnards generally a greater feeling of identity with the social structure of the country.³

[Here follows discussion of general and military matters.]

B. Political

30. The formal campaign opens tomorrow. In the countryside as well as here in Saigon, there are many banners and signs urging the people to register and vote. One slogan reads: "Only with independence are there elections, only with elections is there independence."

³ Following a period of protracted crisis, on May 2 the GVN concluded negotiations with the Montagnards on the implementation of an October 8, 1966, tentative agreement on granting increased political autonomy and greater civil rights to the tribesmen. Thieu signed the decree proclaiming the Statut Particulier on August 29. Documentation on U.S. efforts to involve exiled FULRO leader Y Bham Enuol in the resolution of the matter is *ibid.*, POL 30 VIET S.

31. Thieu and Ky have kept in the public eye with a series of well publicized ceremonies and inspection visits to the provinces. Tran Van Huong has also managed to be quite visible, mostly by means of frequent press interviews. Phan Khac Suu has relied mostly on his role as Assembly chairman for pre-campaign public exposure, but he recently made a bid for more attention by calling on General Thieu to reduce the death sentence which a military court handed down on the youthful student slayer of a high school professor.

32. One interesting but not unexpected development is that Duong Van Minh (Big Minh) is throwing his support to Tran Van Huong. Huong and his people apparently arranged for Big Minh to be interviewed in Bangkok by an ABC correspondent, then got the story translated and circulated it to the local papers. The local press carried the story this morning, many with a picture of Mrs Minh calling on Huong before departing Saigon for Bangkok. Huong told an Embassy officer that he does not expect that Minh will be allowed to return before the election. Asked if he intends to use Minh in his government if he wins the election, Huong said that he fully understands the need for military-civilian cooperation but did not say whether Minh would be in his government.

33. The joint formal campaign schedule, as planned by the Central Election Campaign Committee (composed of representatives of all the candidates), includes a television appearance by all eleven Presidential slates tomorrow evening. Each slate will have five minutes. Four of the slates will also have ten minutes each on the radio tomorrow night, with the remaining seven getting radio time on the evenings of August 4 and 5. The Presidential slates will also have radio time on ten other evenings in the course of the campaign, each slate to have a total of 25 minutes. Each slate will have a total of three television appearances, for a total of 25 minutes each.

34. Personal appearances in the provinces begin August 6 with a visit to Quang Tri. The candidates will be able to visit 20 provinces, plus four joint appearances in the Saigon–Gia Dinh area. We understand that the major candidates, including General Thieu, will go on at least some of the joint trips to the provinces.

35. The upper house campaign arrangements are somewhat confused. The sheer number of the candidates—480 on 48 slates—makes joint public appearances in the provinces a logistic impossibility, or at least this is the view of the Central Election Campaign Committee. The committee has in fact ruled out any public meetings with voters, though press conferences are permitted. The eliminated Senate slates, particularly those of the militant An Quang Buddhists and the CVT labor union, are continuing to express their dissatisfaction. Thanks to the lifting of censorship, their indignation is getting full coverage in the local newspapers.

36. Although at least one of Tran Van Huong's chief campaign managers continues to say that his workers in the provinces are being harassed by the police, the evidence now available to us suggests that the campaign will most likely be cleanly and fairly conducted. The absolute equality of radio and TV time for all slates in fact goes further than we do in the United States in giving all candidates an even break. It seems likely, however, that a large number of the province chiefs will let it be known that they favor the Thieu–Ky slate. This will be enough in many rural areas to insure a heavy vote for the government slate.

37. Many Vietnamese observers believe that the combined Thieu–Ky ticket is weaker than the old Ky–Loc ticket, in large part because of the disappointment of the Ky supporters. Important groups such as the Hoa Hao and the Catholic Greater Solidarity Force were all but fully committed to Ky; now they have not yet formally made up their minds to back the Thieu–Ky ticket. In part their hesitation stems from the suspicion that Thieu and Ky will not stick together. It also reflects anti-military feeling, which is increased by the Thieu–Ky merger.

38. Perhaps an equally important reason for the hesitation of many groups is their hope of striking a better political deal with the government slate. As I mentioned, the Thieu–Ky ticket intends to back six Senate slates. Most of the major political groups have one or more Senate slates, and they may be angling for government support of their Senate candidates in return for their support to the Thieu–Ky ticket. Despite the hesitation and divisions of some major groups over the question of whether to back Thieu–Ky, we continue to expect that Thieu–Ky will win by a respectable margin.

39. Communist reaction to the coming elections is now somewhat clearer. The Viet Cong's governing body, the NLF Central Committee Presidium, has called for a boycott of the election. We do not believe that they have either the political or military strength to seriously disrupt the elections. They have the military forces to hit selected targets very hard, but when the target is millions of voters and thousands of polling stations, they do not have the resources to be effective.

40. We have some reports, including press stories, that indicate the military intend to exercise their influence in the new regime through a modified Armed Forces Council. This would be a group of the senior Generals, probably corresponding roughly to the present military membership of the Directorate. There is of course every reason to believe that the military do intend to continue to influence the government, and it is not surprising that they should want to form such a committee for the purpose. The Constitution in fact makes provision for an Armed Forces Council, the organization and regulation of which is to be prescribed by law.

41. The danger, of course, is that the military will seek to perpetuate government by a military junta and will not permit meaningful civilian participation in the new government. Ky recently added to the fears of those who suspect that the Generals merely intend to put a thin civilian facade on their present government by military committee. He was reported by the press, apparently accurately, as threatening a coup if the future government proved to be "unworthy," corrupt or pro-Communist. I have already let Bui Diem and Ky know my strong views on any such possibility and I intend to reiterate them to Ky later today.

42. I have impression that both Thieu and Ky are well aware of the need to set and maintain legal institutions and procedures, and I hope that Ky's remark was merely another unfortunate example of his penchant for off-the-cuff shockers which he really does not mean. I must say, however, that it appears certain that the military leaders were thinking very seriously of at least dissolving and probably arresting the Assembly on the morning of July 18. The absolute need for civilian support and participation in the government is thus a lesson which they seem to have learned only in part. Some of the corps commanders in particular have evidently not yet absorbed it.

43. It will require constant attention and some pressure from us to oblige the military to continue to expand the area of civilian participation and control in the government, and to give meaning and influence to the new constitutional bodies which make up the necessary checks and balances in the new government. This will have to be a gradual process, and it cannot be realistically expected that it will be accomplished at one stroke by the September elections. Fortunately most of the leading civilian politicians seem to understand this point, though they are not always willing to admit it.

[Here follows discussion of economic and military matters.]

Bunker

265. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam¹

Washington, August 2, 1967, 1753Z.

14979. Literally eyes only for the Ambassador from the Secretary. This is a highly personal message from me to you on the eve of the opening of the electoral campaign period in Viet Nam. Its purpose is to substitute for a stream of subsequent messages about clean elections which might otherwise flow out of Washington because of much nervousness here and the great sensitivity of this point. I will do my best to keep everyone from trying to show Ellsworth Bunker how to suck eggs. I just want you to know that I have complete confidence in your determination to do everything possible to ensure fair and clean elections and will not be heckling you on a day-to-day basis.

What may be helpful to you will be a special and frequent press roundup from here on this subject so that you will know reactions here and will in the process have some arguments in hand which you can use when needed with the South Vietnamese. I will arrange for Bundy to provide you such a series.

It was not surprising to me but very heartwarming to hear from McNamara, Katzenbach and others how quickly you have gotten on top of things and what general admiration and respect your American colleagues and the South Vietnamese have for the job you are doing.

Personal regards to you and Carol.

Rusk

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Memos to the President, 8/3–27/67, Vol. II. Secret; Nodis; No Distribution Outside Department. Drafted and approved by Rusk and cleared by Read. On a covering note, Rostow wrote to the President: "This highly private message from Sec. Rusk to Amb. Bunker will interest you." A notation on the covering note indicates that the President saw the telegram.

266. Memorandum From William J. Jorden of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Special Assistant (Rostow)¹

Washington, August 3, 1967.

SUBJECT

Talk with Bui Diem

The Ambassador just returned from Saigon—with a bad summer cold, but otherwise in good spirits.

He was under instructions from both Thieu and Ky to convey good wishes to President Johnson and to assure him that the two of them are working together, determined to maintain the military unity they had promised.

Diem spoke quite movingly about their feelings toward our President. He quoted Ky as follows: "President Johnson is carrying many heavy burdens. He has so many problems to deal with. And yet, because of circumstances, he must worry about Viet-Nam every day even though we are at the other end of the world. We must try not to add any more to his worries. He is our friend."

Thieu and Ky are determined to stick together. Diem admits, however, that there is little love between them—and even less between some of their followers. But past bitterness has been smoothed over and the new ticket is working out.

Diem thinks there is little doubt that Thieu-Ky will win the election. But he has cautioned both men—and their supporters—not to fall prey to over-optimism. They have several important strikes against them—both are military men, neither is a Southerner, both are relatively young. Diem would not hazard a guess on what percentage of the votes the ticket would get; he thinks that with the campaign just getting underway, any estimates now would be meaningless. It is clear he believes the military ticket will get less support than Ky alone would have garnered.

Diem thinks there is fairly strong Southern and civilian support for Huong and Suu. Surprisingly, he said he thought Huong had lost some ground in the last week or so and that Suu has gained strength, especially in Saigon.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Memos to the President 8/3–27/67, Vol. II. Secret; Eyes Only. In his covering note transmitting the memorandum to the President the next day, Rostow noted: "Bill Jorden maintains a useful, special tie to Bui Diem." A notation on the covering note indicates that the President saw the memorandum. (Ibid.)

There *is* an agreement between Thieu and Ky that the latter will have a decisive voice in future government policies and actions. The reported new military committee has Ky as its chairman and Thieu as a regular member. Diem thinks Ky will run the committee, not vice-versa.

Ky's plan for post-election action calls for a thorough reshuffling of the Government. The main emphasis will be on five ministries—Defense, Pacification, Chieu Hoi and Information, Foreign Affairs, and Economy and Finance. General Vien is slated to become Defense Minister. Ky plans a thorough-going overhaul of the armed forces and General Thang will be responsible for carrying it out. Diem expects changes from top to bottom—probably most corps commanders and many division commanders will be replaced.

There will be problems of “face” in giving Thang this job because he is a relatively junior general. On the other hand, he is widely respected as honest and incorruptible. His base operations probably will be as Deputy Chief of Staff. A more senior general will be chief of staff.

Thang will also have responsibility for the security elements of pacification—ARVN as well as PF and RF. A civilian will be in charge of the action programs of RD—health, education, agriculture, etc.

Diem is likely to be called back to Saigon to work in the new government—either to revamp Viet-Nam's foreign ministry or to take charge of the confused information program.

Thieu and Ky followers have been busy preparing a political platform for the campaign. Diem said Thieu's preference was for statements of broad principles. He (Diem) had advised Ky to get in some specifics—particularly on land reform, education, and the like.

Ky hopes to be able to begin developing a national political party after the election. It will be based on the present coalition of forces that is supporting Thieu–Ky as well as those supporters who are successful in the Senate and House elections. Ky says that the main problem for this enterprise is going to be money and an appealing national program.

A friend of mine, Dan Duc Khoi, has just been moved into Ky's inner office by Bui Diem to help Ky with press relations. If anyone can give Ky good advice in this area, it is Khoi.

General Loan is still bitter with Ky because of the latter's withdrawal from the Presidential race. The same is true of Thang and General Tri. But Diem had long talks with all of them and the latter two, at least, seem mollified.

There is surprisingly wide interest in the coming elections. Diem says that the people in Saigon seem to talk about little else these days.

Diem asked what we were concerned about these days as regards Vietnamese politics. I told him:

—keeping the military on the tracks;
 —making the election fair and honest;
 —producing a government that is a good blending of civilians and military—and one that can get the job done.

Bill

267. Memorandum of Meeting¹

Washington, August 3, 1967, 4 p.m.

PARTICIPANTS

Mr. E. Rostow
 Gov. Harriman
 Mr. Sisco
 Mr. Warnke
 Mr. Habib
 Mr. Read
 Mr. Cooper

The principal subject of discussion was the Kissinger report of his conversations with Marcovich and Aubrac upon their return from Hanoi.² There was general agreement that the conversations, as reported by Kissinger, were of considerable potential significance. Assuming that the two Frenchmen were reporting accurately (Kissinger is confident that they were), there were at least four statements made by Dong that are of particular interest, and worth further study and follow-up:

1. The North Vietnamese will be ready to meet secretly with the U.S.
2. An apparent softening of the DRV position with respect to the NLF.
3. A recognition that U.S. forces would have to remain in South Vietnam until after a political settlement.
4. A willingness to accept a “de facto” cessation of bombing.

On the other hand, it was generally agreed that much of Dong’s views would not be acceptable to us and that further hard bargaining would be necessary before we could reach agreement with Hanoi.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA. Secret; Exdis. Drafted by Cooper. The meeting was held in Harriman’s office.

² See Document 263.

It was decided that Kissinger should contact Marcovich and Aubrac, indicate that he had been down to Washington, had found considerable interest in their report, had assurances that their trip and their findings would be held very closely, and that arrangements would be made to pick up certain materials that they had brought back from Hanoi.

It was also agreed that Kissinger, accompanied by Cooper, would go to Paris on or about the 16th of August to meet with Marcovich, and possibly Aubrac, to discuss certain aspects of their report and possibly to pose some questions for further clarification.³ (It is assumed that Marcovich would contact Mai Van Bo after such a meeting.) It was also agreed that members of the Negotiations Committee would study Kissinger's report closely and be prepared to discuss it in further detail at the next meeting of the Committee.

[Cooper met with Kissinger on Friday⁴ and agreed with him on the following: Kissinger would call Marcovich this weekend and convey the agreed-upon information; he will indicate that he and a member of Governor Harriman's staff will be prepared to go to Paris some time in mid-August to meet with Marcovich, at which time Marcovich could turn over the film and other materials he brought back from Hanoi. Some time later next week, when Kissinger and Cooper can firm up their travel plans, Kissinger will make another call to Marcovich, arranging an appointment. It is agreed that we would aim for a meeting on the 17th of August, returning to Washington the next day.]

The Negotiations Committee also discussed the forthcoming elections in Vietnam, and agreed that Ambassador Bunker should be provided with an outline of certain aspects of the election campaign that have special significance for public reaction here. This would be supplementary to the daily press summary. A memorandum on election guideposts, prepared by Mr. Cooper, will be used by Mr. Habib as a basis for drawing up a message to the Ambassador.⁵

³ Cooper made this suggestion in an August 3 memorandum to Harriman. (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Harriman Papers, Subject Files, Vietnam—General, July–Dec. 1967) In an August 3 memorandum to Cooper, Fred Greene noted that while Dong had not deviated from an insistence upon linking a halt with talks, the conversations with the two Frenchmen “do offer potentially useful lines for further consideration and possible exploration.” (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA)

⁴ July 30. Brackets in the source text.

⁵ Not found.

268. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, August 3, 1967, 7:15 p.m.

Mr. President:

As instructed, I have checked Gen. Eisenhower's idea of trading Soviet "supplies" to Hanoi for a cessation of our bombing of the North.²

1. Bus Wheeler is out of town; and I could not reach him on this issue.

2. Sec. Rusk believes that militarily it would be a good trade; but he wishes to think further about the implications for the balance of power and influence in Hanoi. He fears it might turn Hanoi over to the Chinese Communists. He is not sure, but wishes to consider the matter before giving a judgment. In addition, he would prefer to get some response from the Russians to his question: What would you do if we stopped bombing? In his last talk with Dobrynin³ he thought he detected some Soviet interest in the question and does not wholly rule out a response. It would be better if they put up a formula than if we put up a formula.

3. I raised the issue in Nick Katzenbach's small Viet Nam group which is now meeting regularly. Here are some of the reactions:

—Nick thinks it might work, but only if it were followed pretty promptly by negotiations. Moscow would have to tell Hanoi: You said you would negotiate if bombing stopped; bombing will stop; but we can only get bombing stopped if we stop sending military supplies.

—There was general agreement that we could get in trouble with the deal if North Viet Nam were to release some of its military manpower from dealing with bombing and put a massive assault across the DMZ. Under these circumstances the pressure to go back to bombing the North would be almost irresistible in the U.S.

—Paul Nitze thought the deal was good but he does not believe in negotiations as a way to end the war unless—as in Korea—the negotiations simply confirm a situation which exists on the ground. He

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Memos to the President, 8/3–27/67, Vol. II. Secret.

² According to a memorandum of August 3, Goodpaster reported that Eisenhower had suggested an offer to be made to Moscow: "If you stop sending supplies to Hanoi, we will stop bombing the North." A covering note indicated that the President requested that Rostow obtain the recommendations of Wheeler, Nitze, and Rusk. (Ibid.)

³ Rusk last saw Dobrynin on July 26 in a meeting that lasted from 6:42 p.m. through 9:15 p.m. (Ibid., Rusk Appointment Book, 1967) No notes of the meeting have been found.

thinks that we are moving toward a situation where we can master the situation on the ground and are moving in that direction in particular in II and III Corps. But, following Bob McNamara's views, he believes we could dispense with bombing the North and still proceed on the ground in the South successfully. Therefore, he believes the deal is sound; although he also was troubled at what we would have to do if they switched military manpower to the South in a big way.

—Dick Helms saw no trouble in putting the proposition to Moscow and getting their reaction.

4. My own preliminary conclusion is:

—We would, of course, have to get a fairly clear idea of what we mean by "supplies" and make sure that Eastern Europe did not pick up and send what the Soviets turned off. Do supplies, for example, include military trucks? Oil? How much oil?

—The Chinese influence question is complex; and I would be inclined to let the Russians decide the answer. They know better than we what they would gain and lose in Hanoi influence by making this deal.

—We would have to link the question to the issue of serious negotiations to end the war. In my bones I do not feel the deal would hold up for very long if the war continued at its present scale with violations of the DMZ and continued massive infiltration from the North.

5. I think we will want to have, before making such a proposition, a rather complete analysis from CIA as to precisely what the Soviets are sending into Hanoi. I shall make sure this is done.⁴

6. My net recommendation is that we have a meeting to discuss this with you soon.⁵ It is not a bad idea; and it may be a good idea—so good that Moscow, after checking with Hanoi, will not accept it. It certainly deserves careful staffing out and discussion.⁶

Walt

⁴ According to a memorandum to Rostow from Ginsburgh, August 4, and a memorandum from Rostow to the President, August 5, the CIA concluded that the Soviets would reject the offer because it would damage the standing of the Soviet Union among its allies, and the North Vietnamese would likewise reject it due to probable increased dependence on China. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Memos to the President, 8/3–27/67, Vol. II)

⁵ The President wrote in the margin: "I agree." The issue was discussed at the regular Tuesday Luncheon on August 8. Notes of the meeting have not been found.

⁶ In a memorandum to Rostow the next day, Ginsburgh described the offer as a "bad trade" since, in light of reduced North Vietnamese military requirements due to the bombing halt, the drop in Soviet arms would have a minimal impact; a cessation of shipments was difficult to verify; other sources might be able to make up the difference; and it did not compel reciprocal action on the part of North Vietnam. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Memos to the President, 8/3–27/67, Vol. II)

269. Memorandum From the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (Habib) to Secretary of State Rusk¹

Washington, August 5, 1967.

SUBJECT

Report to the President by the Clifford/Taylor Mission

The highlights of the report that Mr. Clifford and General Taylor will make to the President today are as follows:

1. They will review the type of presentation that they made to the heads of government in each country.

2. They will note the following responses of the governments they visited concerning the conduct of the war:

a. All the nations endorse the essentiality of the bombing program in North Viet-Nam with the Asians urging a considerable step-up including bombing of the dikes, and the Commonwealth countries favoring the present bombing program.

b. All countries generally opposed any additional bombing pauses on the grounds that they were pointless and Hanoi had many means of getting a message to us.

c. All countries also saw great military value in closing Haiphong Harbor, by mining if necessary, but the Asians were less inclined than the ANZACs to worry about possible consequences with the Soviets and Chinese.

d. With regard to extension of the war to other territory the Thai favored action against Sihanouk and the Koreans expressed the hope that China would enter the war, which they believed would result in the elimination of communism in China. Almost all the countries favored the use of troops to cut the infiltration from Laos. Some, particularly the Koreans, favored an Inchon-type landing behind the DMZ.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Sensitive; Nodis. Drafted by H. Freeman Matthews of the Vietnam Working Group. An attached covering note from Read to Rusk, July 5, reads: "Free Matthews accompanied Clifford & Taylor, and he has prepared the attached summary of the Mission's views at my request. A copy of the Mission report for you will be at the WH lunch, but there will probably not be a copy of their private views on the bombing program (see p. 3 of the attachment). Matthews requests that Clifford & Taylor *not* be advised that he has given you a summary of the Mission's recommendations." In the "Clifford-Taylor Report to the President," dated August 5, both men presented the points listed in Habib's memorandum and recommended that the groundwork of their mission to Asia "must be exploited" expeditiously in order to ensure that the proposed troop contributions from the Allied nations were forthcoming. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 5D(1), Allies: Troop Commitments; *ibid.*, Gen. Taylor (1 of 2); and *ibid.*, Manila 4 Nations Conference/Clifford-Taylor Trip, Aug. 1967) According to an attached covering note, Rostow gave the President a copy of the report to examine 2 hours before the luncheon. A notation indicates that other copies were sent "eyes only/no distribution" to Rusk, Katzenbach, McNamara, and Smith.

However, when the need for additional ground forces for such activity was pointed out, their ardor for them waned rapidly.

e. All countries believed that we were losing the propaganda war and should put much more emphasis on stating our case to the world.

f. All countries favored a summit conference with the timing and site not settled, but most likely to take place in November or December.

3. With regard to additional troops for Viet-Nam the Mission is cautiously optimistic:

a. *Viet-Nam* has announced an increase of 65,000 men, reduction of the draft to 18, and extension of lengths of service.

b. *Thailand*. An additional 10,000 men, which we will have to equip, arm, train and replace.

c. *Australia*. The Mission asked for two battalion combat teams and believes Australia will send at least one.

d. *New Zealand*. The Mission asked Ambassador Henning to hold out for one battalion combat team and at least double the present 381 men.

e. *Korea*. President Park's political problems preclude any combat troops in the near future. However, the Koreans agreed to consider sending support troops and civilian manpower.

Questions of timing in all these cases will require resolution.

4. The Mission will make the following recommendations to the President:

a. A vigorous follow-up by our Ambassadors and care in Washington not to cause difficulties with these countries over seemingly unimportant issues, specifically the JCS guidelines on US facilitative support to the Thai internal security efforts, an issue in which Secretary McNamara has been personally involved.

b. Follow-up letters from the President to each chief of government perhaps including President Marcos.

c. Hold off for the time being on any decision about a summit.

d. The US should prepare a vigorous plan for getting our cause on Viet-Nam across to world opinion. This subject should be on the agenda for a summit, but we should in any case move ahead now.

Attached to the covering letter summarized above are individual reports on each country visited.

After the above presentation, Mr. Clifford and General Taylor will give the President privately a memorandum embodying their recommendations on the bombing of North Viet-Nam. They will present their view that the bombing must be stepped up considerably to bring as much pressure as possible against Hanoi and as the least dangerous and expensive means to shorten the war. They will recommend the bombing of all major targets presently not approved short of strictly civilian targets. They will recommend reductions in the size of the prohibited circles around Hanoi and Haiphong and will propose exceptions for specific targets within the 30 and 25 mile buffer zones along the Chinese border. They will also recommend careful re-examination

of the closing of Haiphong Harbor, citing the military need to do so to cut off the influx of supplies. They have already asked CINCPAC to study carefully the possibility of blocking the Harbor by means other than mines, such as perhaps sinking a ship in the narrow channel. Both Mr. Clifford and General Taylor, but especially the former, believe that additional means must be found to bring pressure against Hanoi to keep the war from dragging on with continuing high casualties.

270. Notes of Meeting¹

Washington, August 5, 1967, 1:49–4:08 p.m.

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING
WITH
MR. CLARK CLIFFORD
AND
GENERAL MAXWELL TAYLOR

The President read the text of a formal report by Mr. Clifford and General Taylor.² After reading it, the President said the report was very good.

Mr. Clifford said every country has very enthusiastic ideas about new ways to end the war. The Vietnamese have agreed to

- (1) Add 65,000 more troops
- (2) Lower the draft age to 18
- (3) Extend the length of service.

General Taylor said it will take at least a year to get these troops into combat although the South Vietnamese say this can be accomplished during this calendar year.

Secretary Rusk said that the Vietnamese have agreed to keep troops in service now who would have been demobilized.

The President said that Prime Minister Holt had sent a very nice telegram concerning the Taylor–Clifford mission.³ Mr. Clifford said that

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings. Literally Eyes Only. The meeting was held in the Family Dining Room of the White House. President Johnson's diary indicates that the meeting ended at 3:55 p.m. and was attended by the President, former Under Secretary of State George Ball, Taylor, Rusk, Clifford, Nitze, Christian, Tom Johnson, and Walt Rostow. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary)

² See footnote 1, Document 269.

³ For a summary of the letter from Holt to the President, August 3, see *Foreign Relations*, 1964–1968, vol. XXVII, Document 27.

he believed it would be more difficult for the Australians to turn us down when they are in touch with the President directly.

Mr. Clifford said that each head of government had to say publicly something which would show that there was nothing immediate on sending more troops. They also had to show through public statements that they were not "on the tail of the kite of the United States." There was unanimous agreement by the allies on the conduct of the war.

General Taylor said all the allies were glad that the President had sent the mission to ask their views.

The President said the worst thing we did was to announce that your visit was to discuss troops. Holt wanted us to let him suggest these things to the United States rather than our dictating to him.

The most important thing coming out of the mission, the President said, was that the allies now know what we are thinking. The President said it is important for these nations to have consultations with us.

Mr. Clifford said the head of each government used the trip because of elections in their countries. They arranged press briefings on arrival, before each meeting, and after each meeting.

Mr. Clifford said the Koreans emphasized the incidents along the parallel with North Korea more with the United States than they do in their country. He said the South Koreans are more concerned about infiltration of North Koreans into South Korea by boat than they are of the border incidents.

Mr. Clifford said the editorials and news reports obstructed their mission and in each meeting it was necessary to emphasize that they are not there to ask for troops. They pointed out that what was desired was an exchange of ideas across the board, including discussions on the conduct of the war, over-all strategy, the economy, and pacification.

The mission pointed out that the President faces a very high deficit in the area of \$20 billion. (The President brought them more up to date with a \$30 billion figure.) Mr. Clifford told the heads of state that the President could not manage that kind of deficit and that he has had to ask for a tax increase. He told them that the reaction in the United States would be "If we have to put this much money in the war, what are our allies going to do?" The President is not asking you to do anything. But he does want you to have these facts. For every man you put in there, the United States puts more. We have reached the point where you must help the President meet the demands in Vietnam.

Mr. Clifford said, as each argument was raised, it was "for them to do their part to enable us to do our part."

Mr. Clifford: The President wants to find out if this war is serious enough *to you* for him to go through what he's going through. Then

they began to talk. It was stressed that the American people aren't going to believe this is important to us if it's not important to you.

Clifford said there was an enormous feeling of friendship and goodwill. There were very good statements about the Secretary of State.

The allies felt this was a personal message from the President to them. This gave them a flavor of the President's reasoning.

Secretary Rusk said it may be worth considering renewal of a practice begun during the Korean war of a weekly meeting between the ambassadors of the allied nations in the war.

General Taylor said he found a great deal in common in all the countries visited.

He made the following points:

(1) All the countries said they were for the bombing program. Some asked why we are so humane—that civilian casualties are inevitable during a war.

(2) All would like to see Haiphong harbor closed, although they understand the risk and see it a bit differently than do we.

(3) They favor an expansion of the war. They are not afraid of us moving north of the DMZ or into Laos, if necessary.

(4) They favored a summit, although no place or time was discussed. All of them have elections in the fall, and it was felt that December would be the earliest, but in any case after the Vietnam elections are held.

(5) All want a Foreign Ministers meeting prior to the Summit Conference in Saigon.

(6) One criticism was of our propaganda program. We are not doing an effective job of presenting our case to the world.

(7) All rejected the stalemate theory. The movement is not dramatic, and all felt we should increase our pressure to get movement.

(8) We're going up gradually; they're going down gradually.

There was a general discussion of casualties, with the President asking questions about the method of tabulation. It was agreed that Defense should study the tabulation method, perhaps discounting those who are not hospitalized or who return to duty after treatment without distorting the figures.

General Taylor reported that captured documents show that we are killing more VC than the body counts show.

It was agreed that the infiltration rate gives the most fuzzy figures. Secretary Nitze said we just do not know what the precise figures are.

Mr. Clifford made the following points:

(1) There were valuable visits with Ky and Thieu.

(2) There is a truce between Ky and Thieu now, but he does not know how long it will last.

(3) The worst thing they could do is to rig the elections. They were told this.

(4) On military front, they came through with a pledge to add 65,000 military and paramilitary troops.

(5) Vietnamese have asked for observers for the elections. President wanted to know if it would be wise course to put in 50 of leading businessmen and newspaper executives to report back on the elections.

(6) Clifford said he believes there will be honest elections.

(7) Clifford said his evaluation of Ky and Thieu was that "they know all the right answers. They know what we want them to say and often will say it before they are asked."

(8) Ky is shrewd. Thieu is possibly more discreet and more profound. Thieu doesn't have the flair for drama and exercises more caution. Thieu may be somewhat less popular, as a result.

There followed a discussion about the percent of non-American participation in South Vietnam.

Secretary Rusk said that the percentage of non-American participation in Vietnam is larger than the non-American participation in Korea.

There was a discussion of the effectiveness of South Vietnamese troops. General Taylor reported:

- (1) There has been improvement in the ARVN.
- (2) They now are taking three weapons for every one lost.
- (3) The pacification troops are beginning to take hold.

The Vietnamese want to contract the circles of sanctuary around Hanoi and Haiphong and reduce the 30-mile buffer zone between Vietnam and China in the NVN bombing runs.⁴

The President said he did not mind including some but he was afraid of the fliers going over the Chinese border. It was pointed out that it takes only 1½ minutes for an F-4 to cross the border zone and three minutes for subsonic aircraft.

The President asked Mr. Rostow to look into the matter of sanctuaries. Secretary Rusk said the Russians have every reason to blockade Berlin now, that it probably would do that right away and attribute it to Vietnam.

Then, Mr. Clifford gave a country-by-country rundown on their visits:

Thailand

(1) There were two long visits with the Prime Minister and the Cabinet.

⁴ In a memorandum to Katzenbach on this proposal, August 8, Bundy stated that he regarded the narrowing of the circles around Hanoi and Haiphong as "modest" measures that were acceptable. However, a reduction of the border buffer zone could bring about "extreme reactions of some sort" from the Chinese or, at the very least, counteract the rising friction between China and North Vietnam and the political deterioration within China itself. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Bundy Files: Lot 85 D 240, Top Secret WPB Chron., Jun./Aug. 1967; also *ibid.*, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S)

(2) There was not a disagreement with us on the need for more Thai troops.

(3) Thais say they have their problems with guerillas in Northeast Thailand.

(4) There is a leadership problem with the military. They do not have enough leaders for additional manpower.

(5) Personally believe they are going to come through.

Australia

(1) Met all day Sunday.

(2) They were hard nuts.

(3) They had a long list of their contributions to Vietnam already.

(4) Real progress was made with Holt when went upstairs alone and told of the seriousness of the matter.

(5) Holt told Taylor that he was such a good salesman that he was glad he had not brought his wife to the meeting.

(6) The Australian commander in Vietnam is interested in filling out his contingent from current strength of 6,500 to about 9,000

New Zealand

(1) They had a long list of reasons they should do more.

(2) Prime Minister Holyoake said he would study the proposal and bring the public along.

(3) The only anti-Vietnam demonstrations were in New Zealand.

Korea

(1) Park showed up well.

(2) They have 47,000 men there now.

(3) We asked for another division.

(4) They must get the approval of their assembly.

(5) They offered additional support troops. These will total 3,000 to 3,500 to release other men for combat duty.

(6) The Koreans would send 5,000 civilians to help with chores. These would be veterans who would come in for \$400 a month.

In summary, Clark Clifford said that if we continue at the same level of ground effort and bombing that he is unable to see that this will bring us to the point we want to be.

He said he believes that a year from now we again will be taking stock. We may be no closer a year from now than we are now.

As long as the supplies continue to reach the troops in the South coming in from Laos, over the Northeast Railroad, through Haiphong Harbor, and down from Cambodia we can't get the war over. As long as the faucets are on, we cannot reach our objective.

We have to give increased attention to stopping this flow. The attitude of the allies is that we must increase this pressure. As long as Hanoi continues, there seems to be no diminishing of Hanoi's will to continue the war. We must focus on the supply. There was no concern anywhere in the countries visited about Red China entering the war. There was the same reaction to the Soviets entering the war.

Clifford suggested that the margins be moved closer to Red China and that additional targets be approved. He said the rewards justified the risks.

General Taylor said that they had left a lot of work for the ambassadors in each country. He said troops will trickle in. But there is a very genuine need to improve our presentation of U.S. policies and position to the world.

The allies agreed that our cause is just but our story isn't getting out. General Taylor said the graduated application of force was working, but there is a very great need to keep the pressure on.

271. Memorandum Prepared by the Board of National Estimates, Central Intelligence Agency¹

Special Memorandum No. 7-67

Washington, August 8, 1967.

SUBJECT

The September Presidential Election in South Vietnam

[Here follow material on the Thieu-Ky merger, an analysis of the civilian contenders, and a discussion of the pre-election period.]

Outlook

13. As things now stand, the military slate has to be the favorite in the coming election because of its large and relatively united organization, the finances available to it, and its control of the government. However, it is not unbeatable, and the civilian candidates will in any event play a key role in the election process. Even if the civilians do not unite, there is just enough uncertainty about the strength of military unity and enough uncommitted groups of votes to make for some fluidity.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, IG(1) Elections. Secret.

14. The chances that the election will be held on schedule appear fairly good. The generals would probably consider postponing the election only if they felt their chances at the polls were so poor that even extralegal pressures would not tip the voting in their favor. It is conceivable that such a situation might develop, but not likely.

15. We can be less confident about the chances for fair elections. If the leading civilians continue to pursue their individual candidacies and no crisis develops, the military slate should be able to win honestly. However, an attempt by the civilian candidates to unite would probably cause the military to react by exerting questionable pressures. If unfair tactics by the military began to affect campaigning seriously, the civilian contenders might withdraw in protest, thus rendering the election largely meaningless. If illegal tactics were employed on election day or immediately prior to it, the civilians could refuse to acknowledge the results, and instead charge fraud. Even if the civilians do not unite, the generals may tend to underestimate their own prospects and thus feel compelled to exert unnecessary pressures. Additionally, some province chiefs and other local government officials may independently become overzealous and ultimately do more damage than good. Further complicating the general issue is the possibility that the elections may be widely regarded as having been unfair even though the military leaders make no deliberate efforts in this direction.

16. Whether or not it were well-founded, a general belief that the elections were rigged would thwart the major purpose of constitutional development—that of establishing a legitimate mandate for the government which in turn would improve its prospects for rallying popular participation and support. To dispell such suspicions, the civilian contenders at a minimum would have to acknowledge tacitly that the elections were fair, and the constituent assembly—now acting as a provisional legislature—would have to ratify the election results without reflecting much doubt. Even more effective would be the appointment of the candidate who runs second as prime minister since it would considerably strengthen the government's claim to legitimacy. There are, however, many problems—including the question of military rivalries after the election—which are standing in the way of such a development, and it constitutes little more than a possibility at this point.

For the Board of National Estimates:

Abbot Smith
Acting Chairman

272. Note From the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (Bundy) to Members of the Department of State Negotiations Committee¹

Washington, August 9, 1967.

I have drafted the attached possible instruction to Henry Kissinger for his trip to Paris.² I suggest that Mr. Cooper be the focal point for comment and the preparation of a final draft by tonight or tomorrow morning. Kissinger comes to Washington tomorrow and will be leaving early next week.

The attached draft follows closely the independent suggestions of Gene Rostow. It is his feeling, as it is mine, that we do not wish—at least at this stage—either to endorse the Kissinger suggestion on what would be required to stop the bombing, or to be drawn into this subject through this rather tenuous channel. Instead, I believe we should take the more limited line stated in the draft, which I believe is entirely adequate to see if in fact this is a real channel that the North Vietnamese wish to use.

With this limited message, my own feeling is that Chet Cooper should not go to Paris personally. I think this would tend to dramatize things beyond what they presently deserve, and above all there is nothing of great substance in the present message, which would require his elaboration.

A part of my feeling, in drafting along these lines, arises from what I understand to have been a clear reaction at high levels yesterday—that the “no change in reinforcement” formula put to Pham Van Dong by the Frenchmen is not in fact an acceptable trade. This judgment is of course basic to our choice of approach. Another added element is

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, S-AH Files: Lot 71 D 461, Kissinger Project. Secret; Exdis. This Committee included Harriman, William Jorden of the NSC Staff, Philip Habib, Heyward Isham, and Harriman’s assistants Cooper and Daniel I. Davidson.

² Not printed. Bundy’s draft message, written on August 8, repeated a message contained in a memorandum from Eugene Rostow to Harriman, August 7, which proposed that Aubrac and Marcovich request on behalf of the U.S. Government that representatives of the United States and North Vietnam meet secretly in a third country such as Laos. Bundy’s emphasis on caution in pursuing the Kissinger initiative received support from Heyward Isham of the Vietnam Working Group, who in an August 10 memorandum to Cooper warned that as a result of recent diplomatic activity, “We are now in some danger of having a proliferation of channels to Hanoi.” (Ibid.)

the biographic data on Aubrac, which to me is quite unmistakable as to his political orientation.³

William P. Bundy⁴

³ In the background message preceding the draft message, Bundy asserted that Aubrac was a Communist, and suggested that any message sent through Paris be given only to Marcovich.

⁴ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

273. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, August 9, 1967, 2:45 p.m.

Mr. President:

Herewith a CIA paper I asked to be prepared on North Vietnamese losses during infiltration.

They calculate that:

- losses increased from 1965 to 1966;
- losses *averaged* 20% in 1966;
- although sickness and defection were the major direct causes, bombing had a big indirect effect by lengthening routes, increasing time en route, etc.

- in my notes on Senator Mansfield I said: "Several prisoners report that bombing results in the loss of more than half those whom they try to infiltrate."

Although I would now use the average CIA figure, here are some of the reports which underlay that sentence:

1. North Vietnamese soldier detained on June 16, 1967, stated that of group of 300 men infiltrating, there were only 30 on arrival.

2. Desertion rate of North Vietnamese coming into Laos mounting daily, had reached 40% as compared to 5% in past years; but figure as high as 80% for Montagnards recruited into North Vietnamese forces.

3. A member of the 324th Division reported that 15 men out of his 170-man group deserted; another soldier reported that 26 out of his 52-man group deserted.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Memos to the President, Vol. II, 8/3–27/67. Secret. The notation "L" on the memorandum indicates that the President saw it.

Without bombing of infiltration trails—with all their direct and indirect effects—these desertions, disease rates, etc., would not be occurring.

Moreover, if we weren't bombing, the total level of attempted infiltration would be much, much higher than it is.

With the greatest possible respect, I don't back away from my difference with Bob McNamara on this.

Walt

Attachment

Intelligence Memorandum

Washington, August 9, 1967.

NORTH VIETNAMESE LOSSES DURING INFILTRATION

Summary

The limited evidence available for 1966 indicates that a substantial number—perhaps as many as 20 percent—of the North Vietnamese who began infiltration to South Vietnam through Laos were lost en route. The total number lost was nearly 10,000 men if the 53,000 accepted total of infiltrators is used as a base or about 15,000 men if the 81,000 total of accepted and possible infiltrators is used. The loss rate for those who came through the Demilitarized Zone appears to have been somewhat lower, probably because of the lower incidence of illness during the shorter journey.

Evidence for 1967 is still too limited to permit comparison. It is clear, however, that en route losses during infiltration are continuing at a significant rate. As further information becomes available it should be possible to be more certain both of the total loss figure during infiltration and the percentages lost through various causes.

The 1996 Infiltration Losses and Their Causes

Three fourths of the losses of infiltrators via Laos in 1966 resulted from death or permanent incapacitation because of illness, mainly malaria. About 10 percent were killed by air attacks and 5 percent were permanently lost through desertion.

The 1966 loss rate appears to have increased several times over the 1965 rate. Evidence on losses in 1965 is very limited. There appears, however, to have been an increased incidence of serious sickness in

1966. In addition, available reports for 1965 attributed no losses directly to air strikes although undoubtedly some infiltrators were killed or seriously wounded in this manner.

Perhaps as many as half of all infiltrating troops suffer to some degree from malaria en route to South Vietnam. As a result of malaria and other health problems, it is possible that nearly 20 percent of those who arrive in the South are not immediately fit for combat. Most of these men, however, probably recover sufficiently for combat.

Although air strikes apparently do not directly cause many casualties, they have had other significant effects on the loss rate. One of the most important has been to force infiltrating units to change their mode of movement in North Vietnam from truck to travel on foot, thus increasing the time needed to infiltrate. This, in turn, results in a higher rate of sickness.

Methodology

Some 53,000 North Vietnamese are accepted as having infiltrated into South Vietnam during 1966. About 75 percent of these—39,750 came through Laos—the rest through the Demilitarized Zone. Since the evidence shows that about 20 percent of those starting the trek never reached South Vietnam, this would indicate that some 49,687 left the North via Laos in 1966 and 9,937 were lost en route. A similar computation using the total of 81,000 infiltrators which includes both “accepted” and “possible” categories would indicate that about 15,000 may have been lost in 1966 en route through Laos.

Figures on infiltration through the Demilitarized Zone are inadequate to make a meaningful comparison. Reports on three units totaling 740 men have been received which mention losses en route. The loss rate for these three units runs at about ten percent.

Table I summarizes the data used for the estimates in this report.² Evidence on about 7,000 infiltrators in 11 units varying in size from company to regiment made up the data base for the Laos route. Four units with a total of 1,777 men infiltrated during the last half of 1965 and seven units with a total of 5,390 men infiltrated throughout 1966. The information on losses was derived from those interrogations of captured infiltrators which are immediately available. Poor interrogation methods caused gaps in information and, as a result, the data base for estimating each of the four categories of causes is considerably less than the total number of infiltrators. To produce estimates of permanent losses it is assumed on the basis of limited evidence that half of all deserters eventually are returned to duty and that two thirds of the men who drop out of their units during infiltration are eventually returned to duty.

² Not printed.

274. Memorandum From the Deputy for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (Komer) to the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker)¹

Saigon, August 9, 1967.

Our most urgent need is to cope with the abominable US press treatment of the election campaign. As we agreed on the phone, the press is managing to put the worst construction on everything. What is basically sheer inefficiency, endemic in Vietnam, they see as positive evil.²

Last year, to put the best face on the Constituent Assembly referendum, I formed a White House task group with Bill Moyers in the chair. My constant refrain was to emphasize one sensible theme about that referendum and to urge keying all of our press handling to it. We picked my theme that the size of the vote would be the best single indicator of success. We deliberately played down our own expectation of at least a 70 per cent turnout of registered voters (we even exceeded that). Instead, we opined that even a 50 per cent turnout would be regarded by us as a major demonstration of growing popular interest in the political process, and a defeat for the VC (who of course were attempting to disrupt the election). As it turned out, most of the press play was on the impressively large turnout. The result was a big plus.

Admittedly, it was easier to key the last election to the single theme of turnout than it is this election, where the candidates are predominantly politicians rather than mostly faceless men. But we must again pick a *few basic points* and keep hammering them home in every way in an attempt to provide the press a realistic appraisal of the election. I suggest the following:

1. *Anything less than a 70–80 per cent vote for Thieu/Ky is a strong indicator of a reasonably fair election* (if our hunches are correct, Thieu/Ky will probably win with less than a majority—thus we would lay the groundwork for a contention that they had hardly rigged an election in which they didn't even get half the vote).

¹ Source: Center for Military History, DepCORDS/MACV Files, Bunker Memos to RWK, 1967–68. Confidential. Copies were sent to Locke, Calhoun, and Zorthian.

² In telegram 2972 from Saigon, August 12, Bunker reiterated this theme of “unfair” press criticism of the GVN. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S)

2. In focussing almost exclusively on the presidential race, *we tend to ignore a potentially far more important development—the diffusion of power between the executive and a new legislature*, which under the constitution will have even greater power than the US Congress. Whoever gets elected president will have to deal with a powerful and independent senate/assembly. If the friskiness shown by the Constituent Assembly is any guide, the man in Independence Palace will have at least as much trouble with his congress as our Presidents do with our Congress. By focussing the issue on the advent of a civilian-dominated National Assembly, we will help diffuse the impact of the military retaining executive power.

3. *We seem to be applying standards higher than those in the US to a country with no experience of democracy*, and one barely a dozen years old. Incumbent American administrations take every reasonable advantage of their position. Can we expect the GVN to do less?

4. Although this is a country where nothing seems to work very well, *we ascribe every mistake (such as at Quang Tri)*³ *to positive evil intent instead of sheer inefficiency*. Experienced US correspondents should know better.

Themes like the above, constantly played and embroidered upon, would go a long way toward putting the election campaign in perspective. Perhaps there are even better ones. But we are faced with a short-term emergency. We have about three weeks to get our points across. We'd better do so quickly.

R. W. Komer⁴

³ According to Bunker's 15th weekly report, telegram 2686 from Saigon, August 9, on August 6 a government-sponsored plane supposedly ferrying the 18 nonmilitary candidates for President and Vice President to the first joint campaign appearance at Quang Tri was instead diverted to a U.S. Marine Corps base at Dong Ha. (Ibid.) This telegram is printed in full in Pike, *The Bunker Papers*, pp. 111–117.

⁴ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

275. Memorandum for the Record¹

Washington, August 9, 1967.

SUBJECT

Meeting with General Eisenhower, 9 August 1967

I met with General Eisenhower for about three-quarters of an hour at Walter Reed Hospital in the late morning of 9 August. The purpose was to cover with him three topics which Mr. Rostow had asked me to bring to his attention. I had briefly met with General Eisenhower on the afternoon of 6 August, and had given him a brief report on the situation in Vietnam.

On 9 August I began the discussion by reporting the activity within the government relating to his recommendation to examine the possibility of “trading” a cessation of bombing of North Vietnam (or the northern part thereof) for a cessation by the USSR of inshipments of military material to the North Vietnamese. I drew upon the CIA assessment of a postulated agreement between the US and USSR on this matter, noting in particular the conclusion that the Soviets would be unlikely to agree without the prior agreement of the North Vietnamese and that the North Vietnamese would be likely to refuse to agree. I told him that the matter has been receiving consideration by an interdepartmental group at undersecretary level, and that Secretary Rusk is pondering the matter as stated to me by Mr. Rostow. I also reported that the US has put to the Soviets the following question: You say that if the US stops its bombing of the North, there would be talks; you also say that you can’t get Hanoi to make a compensatory escalation; we would like to know what you, the Russians, would be willing to do as a compensatory action. I told him Mr. Rostow had informed me that the US is still waiting to see what the Russians give as an answer, and that we have jogged them once or twice for an answer.

I added that the current governmental thinking is that the proposition advanced by General Eisenhower would only work if the North Vietnamese want to end the war. In such case, it would have some face-saving value for them. At the same time it would meet the requirements stated by the President for some de-escalation from the other side. I further reported Mr. Rostow’s feeling that this proposition may well prove to be worth a trial. We do, however, have to think out where the US would find itself if the Soviets were to accept, and then cheat

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Name File, Eisenhower. Secret. Prepared by Goodpaster on August 10.

on the agreement. Specifically, how could the President go about justifying resumption of bombing in such a case? Finally, as suggested by Mr. Rostow, I told General Eisenhower that there had been no decision in the matter, that the government is working hard on it, that it fits very well into other actions (such as the question posed to the Russians) and that there is great interest in it. I told General Eisenhower that if he had any further thoughts, now or later, the government would be interested in hearing them. He indicated he had nothing further to suggest at this time. He found particularly interesting the information in the CIA report that only a very small part of the material being utilized by the communists in *South* Vietnam is of Russian origin, and that the bulk (small arms, mortars and ammunition, as well as radios) comes from China. This would suggest that even if Russian supplies were halted (and bombing of the North stopped) the combat in the South could continue, including the battle with US forces. Some reduction of flow could, of course, be accomplished by continuing the air attack against the North Vietnamese panhandle.

[Here follows discussion of the Middle East.]

I then took up the third point raised by Mr. Rostow—the “stalemate” theme that is beginning to appear in connection with the war in Vietnam.² I told him that I felt that this is not a valid or useful concept and that, as Mr. Rostow had stated to me, although progress is painfully slow, the situation is moving favorably. I used the main points of General Momyer’s briefing of 8 July together with a series of charts given me by Mr. Rostow.³ I went through the Momyer briefing in some detail, covering the new flak suppression weapon, the introduction of a countermeasure Pod, the new tactics it has been possible to utilize, and the resulting reduction in attrition rates. I also noted the destruction, for practical purposes, of the North Vietnam Air Force at this time, and the readiness to destroy it again. General Eisenhower was keenly interested. He was especially interested in the mutually reinforcing ef-

²The “stalemate” issue became one of widespread concern to U.S. Government officials during August. In telegram JCS 6105 to Westmoreland, August 1, Wheeler recommended counteracting reports in the press and in Congress that the war had reached a “stalemate” by presenting a counterfactual argument to the media. In his reply, telegram MAC 7180, August 2, Westmoreland concurred and noted the various public relations measures that he had already begun to take “to help clarify the situation in the mind of the public.” (Both in Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Memos to the President, Vol. I, 6/1–8/2/67) On August 7 Rostow sent to McNamara an outline refuting the stalemate thesis by noting the “heavy pressure” placed upon the VC manpower pool and the inability of the NVA’s border operations to “divert” significant numbers of U.S. forces. Rostow concluded, “There is real momentum in the right direction; the task is to maintain and accelerate momentum.” (Ibid., Vol. 2A, Misc. Memos)

³ Not further identified.

fects of reduction of anti-air effectiveness, greater weight of effort against military and transportation targets reducing availability of ammunition, resulting further reduction of anti-air defenses, and further increase in destructive impact on lines of communication. He recalled from his own experience the appearance of such mutually reinforcing effects in Europe when the tempo and systems coverage of the bombing campaign were brought to the proper level. He indicated that this thought underlies much of his concern about a policy of "gradualism". On Mr. Rostow's charts he was interested in the level-off of VC/NVA strength since mid-'66, the generally rising ratio of VC/NVA KIA to friendly forces KIA, the generally rising trend of Chieu Hoi defectors and the sharply rising trend since 1965 of VC/NVA weapons lost to ARVN weapons lost. I also told him there is evidence—for example in the defection and testimony of a VC colonel—that the VC are encountering great manpower difficulties in trying to keep up the strength of their units. General Eisenhower said he agreed that the term "stalemate" is not a valid one to cover the present trend and situation of the war.

G.

Lieutenant General, U.S. Army

276. Memorandum From the Director of the Office of Research and Analysis for East Asia and the Pacific, Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Greene) to the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Hughes)¹

Washington, August 11, 1967.

SUBJECT

Comments on Recent Discussions with NVN Officials Regarding Negotiations

In the past month there have been two contacts with NVN officials, one by two private French citizens and one by a Norwegian diplomat, which Hanoi may take to be authoritative representations of the US position because we have dealt with North Vietnam through "unofficial" or indirect channels in the past. In both encounters the North

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 27-14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA. Secret; Exdis. A copy was sent to Bundy.

Vietnamese heard descriptions of an American position which, taken together, could lead them to conclude that Washington has begun to modify its previous stand regarding negotiations.

In the first instance, in late July, the Frenchmen told Pham Van Dong that the US would be prepared to stop the bombing provided that Hanoi kept its level of supply to the South at present levels and did not intensify its efforts as it had done in past bombing pauses.² Then, around the beginning of August, the Norwegian Ambassador to Peking informed his North Vietnamese counterpart that, on the question of representation during negotiations, the US would be prepared to have the NLF present its points of view either as part of the NVN delegation "or as a separate group."³ This American position might have been inferred in Hanoi from previous public and private statements by US officials, but it does not appear to have been stated this explicitly before.

The North Vietnamese may treat both statements skeptically, since they were not made by American officials. Equally, however, they may conclude that we are reviewing our basic approach and are undertaking to define a new position on specific points, while carefully coordinating the component aspects of this effort. They may link this possible shift on our part to their own negotiating gambits, especially the apparent easing of their position regarding the degree of completeness and permanence of bombing pause and the muffling of earlier emphasis on an exclusive position of the NLF as our interlocutor on matters concerning the South. They may as a consequence want to probe further, to determine whether our position has changed, and if so to what degree.

² See Document 263.

³ The conversation between Algard and Loan on August 5 is described in telegram 664 from Oslo, August 6. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 17 NOR-VIET N)

277. Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger¹

Washington, undated.

You may give your contacts the following message and ask that they deliver it to Pham Van Dong:²

The United States is willing to stop the aerial and naval bombardment of North Vietnam if this will lead promptly to productive discussions between representatives of the US and the DRV looking toward a resolution of the issues between them. We would assume that, while discussions proceed either with public knowledge or secretly, the DRV would not take advantage of the bombing cessation or limitation. Any such move on their part would obviously be inconsistent with the movement toward resolution of the issues between the US and DRV which the negotiations are intended to achieve.

You should say further to Messrs. Marcovich and Aubrac that the United States is prepared to negotiate either openly or secretly. It would seem, however, that a total cessation of the bombing is inconsistent with keeping secret the fact that negotiations are taking place. Accordingly, the DRV may prefer to consider the alternative of a cutback in the magnitude or scope of the bombing while secret negotiations are in progress.

The US is ready to have immediate private contact with the DRV to explore the above approach or any suggestions the DRV might wish to propose in the same direction.³

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, PENNSYLVANIA. Top Secret; Sensitive; Nodis. No drafting information appears on the memorandum.

² Before the message's transmission, Kissinger translated it into French. A reprint of this message, which according to the authors of the *Pentagon Papers* was approved by the President, appears in Herring, *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, p. 726.

³ In an August 12 memorandum, Bundy suggested one semantic alteration to the message to which Katzenbach had agreed: replacement of the words "negotiate" and "negotiations" in the first and second paragraphs of the message with "enter into discussions" and "discussions," respectively. Their reason for the change was concern that the North Vietnamese would attach significance to the fact that the word "discussions" was not used consistently throughout the message in its original form. Presumably Rusk approved the modifications. Also in his memorandum, Bundy requested Rusk's approval for guidance in a meeting that Katzenbach, Harriman, and Cooper were planning to have with Kissinger on August 14. Bundy stated that Kissinger would be given this modification and additional instructions, including not to meet solely with Aubrac, at this meeting. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA) No record of this meeting has been found.

278. Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (Bundy) to Secretary of State Rusk¹

Washington, August 14, 1967.

SUBJECT

Further Bombing Near the Chinese Border: Luncheon Topic

Since I shall be out of action tomorrow morning, making a speech, I am setting down my thoughts on the continuation of attacks in the buffer zone. I have done so after consulting with our senior Chinese expert present here, Richard Donald, who is balanced, objective, and experienced.²

In brief, it is our feeling that it could become highly dangerous to continue the attacks. Even three days may have stretched things, but certainly a continuation for further days in sequence can only create the impression that we are engaged in an unrelenting upward movement in our actions.

We have tended to focus on the danger of major Chinese Communist intervention. I think the odds of this could be significantly increased by continuing our attacks for more days. It has for some months—and increasingly—been the firm conclusion of all experts that the irrational element in Chinese Communist behavior has grown markedly. The fact that they are in disorder may mean that they would be less effective in anything they did, but the odds on their lashing out must be considered to be far less predictable than they would in the past. The great point is that they could well see systematic attacks as an attempt by us to take advantage of their internal weakness and confusion, and this is the very thing that could drive them to action however irrational.

But secondly, there is the effect of systematic attacks on the internal confusion within China. In my own view, that confusion—and how it affects Hanoi—may quite well be the *only* hole card we have that could bring about peace between now and our 1968 elections. At present, there is every indication that the army in China is at odds with the Maoists. A picture of systematic attacks by us might be the one thing that could unite the two in common cause. The odds of this happening seem to me very much greater than the odds of major military intervention, but

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Bundy Files: Lot 85 D 240, Top Secret WPB Chron., July/Aug. 1967. Top Secret; Nodis; Eyes Only. A copy was sent to Katzenbach.

² On August 9 strikes on ten targets in the DRV border area with China began. Donald was on the staff of the Division of Asian Communist Affairs in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs.

the consequences—from the standpoint of our reaching peace in Viet-Nam—seem to me almost equally serious.

In short, I think the over-all strategic (not just “political”) arguments against pushing the attacks farther are terribly strong. I urge that we take stock of what the attacks have accomplished and give ourselves substantial breathing space before renewing them. A picture of our going back in the future once or twice would be an entirely different picture to the Chinese than the picture created by our continuing the attacks now on what they could only take to be a systematic and unceasing basis.³

William P. Bundy⁴

³ In Intelligence Note 676 to Rusk, August 16, Hughes described the Chinese response to the initial attacks in RT 57 as muted. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S)

⁴ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

279. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, August 14, 1967.

SUBJECT

Military Control Organization

Today's situation report on Viet-Nam politics noted a report that the generals have written a “Charter” for their planned Supreme Military Committee. The purpose of the committee is clear: to maintain military control over the government after the election.²

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 1G(2). Secret. The notation “L” on the memorandum indicates that the President saw it. In an attached message to Rostow, August 14, Taylor noted that an August 3 editorial in *The New York Times* was based on the CIA report which was probably leaked to the *Times*. Taylor warned that the newspaper might publish a leaked copy of the document “at some dramatic moment when it can do the most damage.”

² The “Charter” set up a mode for the operation of a military committee after the election. In a memorandum to Rusk, August 15, Hughes reported that the committee would include Ky as chairman, with Thieu, Linh Quang Vien, Cao Van Vien, and the Corps commanders as members. The group's organizational structure was intended to be extended throughout the government as a covert means of military control of the new regime. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 15–1 VIET S)

It is, in effect, a scheme for “guided democracy” in which a half dozen generals would decide finally what was good and bad for the country.

Our text of the alleged “Charter” (22 pages)³ came from a usually reliable source in the Vietnamese military. CIA is checking on the authenticity of the document. They are also checking on whether it is merely a draft, or whether it has actually been adopted by the generals (including Thieu and Ky).

Ambassador Bunker notes that this plan is “completely at variance with Ky’s statement to me on August 11 that any report of an intention to set up an inner military group to run the government could be flatly denied.”⁴

The Ambassador is clearly riled. He has said that if the report is verified, “I will plan to take this matter up in an appropriate way with Ky, since we cannot continue a relationship of confidence with him in such circumstances.”

It is understandable that the military leaders should want a continuing role of importance in the affairs of their government and their country. It is quite another for them to plan to send down the drain much of the patient and constructive work of the past year and a half in the development of representative government. It is also shocking, if true, for the Prime Minister to lie to our Ambassador in this fashion.

I believe Bunker is in a mood to meet this one head-on and that he will do so in an appropriate way. We shall be following this closely.

Walt

³ The “Charter” was disseminated in an Intelligence Information Cable, TDCS DB-315/03208-67, August 13. (Ibid.; also in Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 1G(2))

⁴ As quoted in telegram 3046 from Saigon, August 14. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 15-1 VIET S)

280. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, August 16, 1967, 1240Z.

3243. For the President from Bunker. Herewith my sixteenth weekly telegram:

A. General

1. While the tempo of the war abated somewhat during the last week the political campaign heated up largely due to the continuation of the controversy over the Dong Ha incident² and to charges by certain of the candidates of harassment and of pressure on the part of some GVN provincial and district officials.

2. As a result however of Thieu's conciliatory attitude in the Dong Ha case and of two letters from the Commissioner of Special Administration Tuong to the special election committee, the second one couched in moderate terms and outlining what the GVN was prepared to do in assisting the candidates, the campaign, temporarily derailed, has gotten back on the track. Further investigation confirms the fact, I believe, that the Dong Ha incident arose chiefly from a series of unfortunate occurrences which led to misunderstandings between the candidates and the GVN. Despite many contradictory statements and charges I do not believe that the mixup was a premeditated action by the GVN to humiliate the candidates as the latter alleged but was rather a combination of bad weather and poor planning, execution, and judgment by some GVN officials, combined with impatience and suspicion on the part of candidates who subsequently decided to exploit the issue for political purposes. Both sides acted with a certain degree of childishness, "face" became involved, and therefore neither side acted in a way designed to settle the issue easily. Although delayed longer than seemed reasonably necessary the issue has been resolved and all of the candidates have resumed campaigning. In fact representatives of most of them continued campaigning in the provinces while the controversy was going on in Saigon.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Priority; Nodis. Received at 12:42 p.m. In the covering note transmitting a copy of the telegram to the President, Smith wrote: "Ambassador Bunker's weekly cable emphasizes election developments but contains a hopeful report on how the South Vietnamese plan to reorganize their pacification program." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 8B(1) [A] Bunker's Weekly Report to the President) The notation "L" on the covering note indicates that the President saw the telegram. The telegram is printed in full in Pike, *The Bunker Papers*, pp. 118–127.

² See footnote 3, Document 274.

3. All the candidates held press conferences on Monday and Tuesday of this week. Charges of harassment have been made by some of them, Huong making the most specific allegations in his conference yesterday (Saigon 3150).³ Certainly these charges should be investigated by the GVN and if substantiated, action should be taken to eliminate such practices to the extent possible. In the absence of intimidation some involvement on the side of the “ins” would generally be considered one of the accepted advantages of incumbency. We have evidence also that some officials will at least quietly support opposition candidates. We have been unremitting throughout the Mission in our contacts with the GVN, both civilian and military, to emphasize the prime importance of keeping the elections free and honest. I have continually kept this in the forefront of my talks with Thieu and Ky and have pointed out to them the adverse reactions which have appeared in the US press and in Congressional statements. I believe most of these criticisms stem from the acceptance of rumors as facts and a tendency to gauge the fairness of elections here against standards of perfection which do not prevail in the most advanced democracies.

4. Both Thieu and Ky have been greatly concerned by US press and Congressional reactions. Ky told me yesterday that he and Thieu had decided to send communications to all of the allied governments on what had been done and is being done by the GVN to insure that the elections would be free, fair, and honest. What they have in mind I think is outlining substantially what was reported in our 2869⁴ and 2972⁵ including such things as lifting of press censorship; instructions issued by the Minister of Defense to the armed forces to stay out of the elections and the written directive to armed forces commanders clearly stating rules governing participation of military personnel in election activity; General Thang’s prohibition of political activity on the part of RD workers; instructions from Generals Thieu and Ky to province and district chiefs not to engage in politics; that pursuant to the election law all candidates are being provided certain funds for their campaign; that candidates are being furnished transportation al-

³ In telegram 3150 from Saigon, August 15, Bunker reported on Huong’s press conference of that day in which he accused the GVN of “using threats and pressures to ensure the victory of the Thieu-Ky slate.” (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S) In his weekly report to the President contained in telegram 3824 from Saigon, August 23, Bunker stated: “I have the feeling that this issue is less appealing than it first appeared. The public has noted the charges and in many cases is no doubt prone to believe them. Still, I think the public is also taking note of the fact that despite such allegations the campaign machines of the major candidates are very active in the provinces, that the press is obviously quite unafraid to attack and criticize both the government and the military, and that the government has in fact done a good job of providing campaign facilities for the civilian candidates ever since the Dong Ha furor.” (Ibid., POL 27 VIET S)

⁴ Dated August 12. (Ibid., POL 14 VIET S)

⁵ See footnote 2, Document 274.

though this is not required by law; that all candidates are being given free time on government radio and television; that invitations have been extended by the GVN for observers to come for the elections to various organizations, friendly governments, parliamentary groups, and the international press.

5. I shall report in more detail in the political section on the aftermath of the Dong Ha affair, on the charges of harassment, and on other developments in the campaign.⁶

6. General Westmoreland, Ambassador Komer and I met yesterday with Prime Minister Ky, the Minister of Defense General Vien and General Thang, as the result of a request I had made to discuss our proposals on pacification, particularly Project Takeoff.⁷ General Ky had informed me that the GVN was also contemplating some reorganization of its pacification program as well as of the Vietnamese armed forces. At the meeting yesterday he outlined to us what they had in mind. We will report these proposals in detail separately but I might summarize them briefly:

A. Making the province chief the key individual in the pacification program at the provincial level; giving him adequate authority to manage all civilian and military activities in his province; upgrading the quality of province chiefs.

B. Reorganization and improvement of the Regional and Popular Forces.

C. Improvement of leadership. Ky stated that “we must purify the army by asking poor officers to leave” and mentioned that General Vien had prepared a list of forty senior officers who would be asked to leave the army.

D. General Thang would return to the army as deputy to General Vien and would control the political department, the RF/PF, and the security forces. General Thang will also control the training of the RD teams, and will improve the coordination between RD teams and the military at local levels.

E. Appointment of a Deputy Prime Minister with overall control of the pacification activities of the Ministries involved. Ky remarked that if elected as Vice President he would have little to do so he would deal personally with pacification.

⁶ This section is not printed.

⁷ A report on this August 15 meeting is in telegram 3223 from Saigon, August 16. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S) In a meeting with Ky on August 16, Komer expanded on his briefing of the previous day, emphasizing the need for land reform and internal security. (Memorandum for the Record, August 16; Center for Military History, DepCORDS/MACV Files, Chron File: Komer (Aug–Dec '67)) Project Takeoff was authored by Komer to overhaul completely the pacification effort and make it a priority of the GVN. In a memorandum to Bunker and Westmoreland, July 30, Komer listed the following eight action programs: improvement in future planning, acceleration of Chieu Hoi, attacking the VC infrastructure, greater RVNAF support to pacification, expansion of the mission of the RD teams, increased capability to deal with refugees, renovation of the NP and NPFF, and land reform. (Ibid., Komer–Westmoreland File, 1967)

F. A more direct attack on the VC infrastructure along the lines outlined by Ambassador Komer.

7. Ky mentioned specifically that General Thieu was sorry that he could not attend meeting⁸ but he had specifically endorsed these GVN proposals which General Ky had outlined. General Westmoreland, Ambassador Komer and I felt that these plans for reorganization of the armed forces and the pacification program were constructive and along the lines we have been advocating.

[Here follows discussion of political, economic, and military issues.]

Bunker

⁸ Thieu was on a tour of II Corps.

281. Editorial Note

When the Republic of Vietnam promulgated a new constitution and held nationwide elections during 1967, the U.S. Government initiated a program of covert action to ensure that the electoral process would appear to be free and fair, that there would be a loyal opposition, and that the elected civilian government that emerged would enjoy popular support. The top contenders for the presidency were Air Vice Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky, the head of South Vietnam's military government, and General Nguyen Van Thieu, the nation's chief of state. Initially, U.S. Government policy was neutral in the increasingly bitter scramble between these two individuals. However, with Ky using the power of the government bureaucracy to undermine Thieu, Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker recommended in June 1967 that the U.S. Government offer covert support, consisting mostly of advice and a small amount of financial resources, to Ky's campaign in exchange for his agreement to run a fair electoral race. This request was obviated by the resolution of the Ky-Thieu dispute at the end of June when Ky acceded to the pressure of South Vietnam's military leadership to become the vice presidential running mate of the more senior Thieu. Still, the U.S. Government helped Ky establish a front organization, "the All-Vietnam Bloc," to help ensure the election of this military-backed slate. Although no covert funds were provided to Ky, a channel of advice and encouragement was established through a high-ranking Vietnamese official.

The U.S. Government continued to be involved in the general elections through late summer and fall, eventually providing more than \$200,000 for political action programs. In August a representative of the principal civilian presidential candidate, Tran Van Huong, approached the U.S. Embassy in Saigon with a request for covert funding. To buttress the appearance of a fair election and in order to have some influence over the candidates, Bunker requested covert political and financial assistance for the Thieu–Ky campaign as well as for Huong's candidacy. Washington rejected the request for financial support, but approved providing covert election advice and support.

The 303 Committee also approved another request from Bunker to provide covert support for selected South Vietnamese parliamentary candidates, both before and after their elections, in an effort to build U.S. influence in the National Assembly and facilitate the validation of the presidential electoral results. In October the 303 Committee authorized Bunker to disburse funds to aid candidates for the National Assembly who were supported by the nationalist Dai Viet party and the Vietnamese Confederation of Labor, and on December 1 the 303 Committee approved funds for other nascent political parties and elected individuals in South Vietnam.

After the elections, the U.S. Government, in an effort to bolster popular support for the new civilian government, provided covert support to South Vietnamese veterans, labor, and student organizations and the media. Part of this campaign involved efforts on the part of the U.S. Government to create a left-wing, anti-Communist political group in South Vietnam, which would underscore the new political openness in the country as well as win over nominal supporters of the Vietnamese Communists. This program received approval by the 303 Committee in August. The group, however, was short-lived and was soon amalgamated into a broad anti-Communist political front.

In conjunction with political development in South Vietnam, the U.S. Government sought to drive a wedge between the National Liberation Front (NLF) and its North Vietnamese sponsor by following up contacts with NLF representatives. This effort resulted in prisoner exchanges.

282. Telegram From the Station in Saigon to the Central Intelligence Agency¹

Saigon, August 16, 1967.

CAS 0685. Please pass the following message to the Secretary of State from Ambassador Bunker.

“In view of recent developments described below, I would like to recommend a proposal for your earliest attention and decision.

“On 12 August, an emissary who is a close associate of Presidential candidate Tran Van Huong contacted an Embassy officer and pleaded a strong case for financial support for Huong whom he described as being in severe financial straits. He asked whether there might be an American businessman whom Embassy officer could recommend and to whom appeal for funds could be directed. This development coupled with the increasing pressures upon Prime Minister Ky from our side as well as from the press and internal political events over past two weeks,² leads me to propose that a covert political subsidy in the form of limited funds simultaneously be given to both the Thieu/Ky and Tran Van Huong tickets, the two main contenders in the race for the Presidency. In the case of Thieu/Ky, the funds would be passed securely [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] with whom CAS is in contact. In the case of Huong, funds could possibly be passed by an unofficial American citizen [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] to Huong’s close associate who contacted the Embassy officer to describe Huong’s financial problems.

“My rationale for this proposal is that limited financial support provided now would give us both some degree of leverage on the winner as well as a degree of influence with the loser through which we would hope to obtain his cooperation with the winning candidate’s new administration. While the problem would probably be more critical should Huong win and be faced with a hostile military establishment, a Thieu/Ky victory would on the other hand be more palatable nationally if the civilian contenders play an important role in running the country’s affairs through the new government. An injection of financial aid to Huong’s group now may help to induce Huong to con-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Immediate; Most Sensitive. Carver forwarded the message to Read in an attached memorandum of the same day.

² After the Dong Ha affair, opposition candidates ceased campaigning. At the request of U.S. officials, who feared an anti-American backlash if political activity remained moribund, Huong persuaded the other major candidates to resume their active campaigns on August 12. (Telegrams 2945 and 2970 from Saigon, August 12; *ibid.*)

tinue to campaign as vigorously as possible between now and the election, perhaps thus helping to dispel the atmosphere that now surrounds the entire effort and projecting a more favorable image of the overall campaign. It would also be particularly useful for us to be able to 'do something' now for Ky, who appears to be smarting under the diverse pressures, some of which are described above. He is of course a crucial element in the present and future political mix in Vietnam, and his ego demands a certain amount of attention and reassurance from time to time to keep him aligned on a course of action acceptable to both the Americans and the Vietnamese. Finally, of course, our providing funds to these two groups, particularly the Thieu/Ky organization, will hopefully minimize their attempts to raise funds through unsavory techniques which might hit the press and cause scandal tainting what otherwise may be a reasonably honest election.

"The foregoing should be considered in light of Ky's also having recently approached us through the special CAS channel contact with a specific and detailed request for campaign fund assistance, a request which was politely but firmly turned aside by the CAS officer acting under our policy instructions."

283. Notes of Meeting¹

Washington, August 16, 1967, 2:10–4 p.m.

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING
WITH
SECRETARY RUSK
SECRETARY McNAMARA
CIA DIRECTOR HELMS
WALT ROSTOW
GEORGE CHRISTIAN

Director Helms: Read proposed letter from the President to Ky and Thieu on the Vietnamese elections.²

[Here follows discussion unrelated to Vietnam.]

Secretary Rusk: We need to clarify our strategy on bombing policy.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings. Top Secret; Eyes Only. The meeting was held in the White House.

² Document 284.

The President: Our strategy, as I see it, is that we destroy all we can without involving China and Russia between now and September 1. I do not believe China and Russia will come in. The people will not stay with us if we do not get destroyed all we can. The targets we have authorized³ are in the Hanoi, Haiphong, and buffer zone areas. It's better to hit those targets authorized now rather than waiting six months.

Secretary Rusk: In the buffer zone there is a question as to whether these are specifically authorized strikes or repeaters. The larger the number of sorties in there, the higher the chances are of mistakes.

Secretary McNamara: I must point out that we could invade Chinese air space. Secretary McNamara said he proposed nothing new until next Tuesday.⁴ "I would like to have a week go by to check the accuracy of what we are doing."

Secretary Rusk: There appears to be no ascertainable connection between some of these targets and winning the war. We are trying to wage the war without enlarging it and without causing the Soviets or the Chinese to give us problems in Berlin or Korea. I have no reservations except on these targets.

The President: Let us find the least dangerous and the most productive targets. I would like to be able to say that we have hit six out of every seven targets requested. We have some weather now that is my type of weather. I think we should get [*hit*] every target as quickly as we can. There are three areas that we are not going to hit. We are not going to hit Haiphong Harbor because we are not going to hit any ships. We are not going to bomb Hanoi because we are not going to hit civilians. And we must be careful about the buffer zone because of the danger in going over the border. But we have got to put more pressure on. It was then agreed that the targets more than eight to ten miles away from the buffer zone could be hit without danger.

Secretary McNamara: We took out more rolling stock in one day after the Hanoi bridge was bombed than in any other day in the war.

He [McNamara] said he could get the President 20 more targets.

Secretary Rusk: It's question of what do you ask a man to die for. Some of these targets aren't worth the men lost.

Secretary McNamara: The losses would be the heaviest in the MIG airfield.

The President: What about sending three representatives from each of these organizations.

The President then read a list of organizations representing labor, management, press, foundations, and other associations. It was agreed

³ A reference to the RT 57 strikes which began on July 20.

⁴ August 22.

that this group could be invited to go to Vietnam as observers of the up-coming elections.

The President instructed Secretary Rusk to send the list to Ambassador Bunker for his reaction.

Secretary Rusk asked Secretary McNamara if he could space the air strikes so that it would not appear as a “Roman holiday.” Secretary Rusk said that several strikes on the same day result in charges of escalation and acceleration which may not be in our best interest.

[Here follows further discussion unrelated to Vietnam.]

284. Letter From President Johnson to Chief of State Nguyen Van Thieu and Prime Minister Nguyen Cao Ky¹

Washington, August 16, 1967.

Dear Chairman Thieu and Prime Minister Ky:

I address you together, because at Honolulu, Manila, and Guam we did our work together.²

I wish you to know how much you—and the people of South Viet Nam—have been in my thoughts these days. In my thirty-five years in political life, I have been through twelve elections—some of which I won, but I have also known what it is to lose. I understand something of the emotions and the problems that go with what we call “election fever.”

It has been interesting—even exciting—for me to see your young nation going through this competitive electoral process. Thus far, I have seen few problems I have not also seen in my own country, and known in my own experience.

I believe also that the picture of the South Viet Nam election is beginning to fall into perspective in the United States.

As you come to the final intensive days of the campaign, I am sure you will continue to ensure fairness and equity to all the candidates.

I should like you to know that our government—and most of our people—have no inclination to interfere with or dictate the choice of

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Head of State Correspondence File, Vol. I, Gen. Thieu & Ky. No classification marking.

² Reference is to the joint U.S.-Vietnamese conferences held at Honolulu in February 1966, at Manila in October 1966, and at Guam in March 1967.

leaders now being made by the people of South Viet Nam, as they move forward on the path of self-determination. In any democracy, of course, differences of view are extensive and intensive, vigorous and visible. But you should be aware that our resolve to defend Viet Nam against aggression remains firm; and the support for this course will be strengthened—here and elsewhere—by the free and fair elections we know will take place on September 3.

As you know, the election itself is only one phase in the building of effective constitutional government. Whatever the outcome, other critical tasks lie ahead: the formation of a broadly based government; the holding of parliamentary elections; the development of good working relations between the executive and the legislative; and, above all, making your constitution work effectively.

But I am writing you now not to offer advice but simply to say that I am following events in Viet Nam with interest, sympathy, and great respect for you both, for your colleagues in the government, for all the candidates who are venturing now into democratic politics, and—above all—for the gallant people of your country.³

Sincerely,

Lyndon B. Johnson

³ According to an August 18 memorandum from Frank Wisner of CORDS to Calhoun, Ky faced “enormous” difficulties since acceding to Thieu’s dominant position on the Presidential ticket, including being abandoned by former allies and being pressured by those remaining (such as Loan) to take a strong stand against Thieu, even if it meant “to prepare a coup d’etat.” Perhaps the most vexing of the problems was the fact that the Thieu–Ky campaign had run out of funds; Thieu had already obligated all of the campaign’s monies and Ky could find no alternative source. (Center for Military History, DepCORDS/MACV Files, GVN Elections (General): 1967)

285. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam¹

Washington, August 17, 1967, 0036Z.

22135. 1. Please deliver following Presidential letter to General Thieu as soon as possible.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Immediate; Exdis. Drafted at the White House and approved by Francis J. Meehan of S/S.

“Dear General Thieu:

Clark Clifford and General Taylor have informed me of their useful discussions with you and your colleagues during their recent visit to Viet-Nam. They have also informed me of the conversations they have had with our other allies in Thailand, Australia, New Zealand and Korea. As you know they were unable to visit the Philippines at this time. I am writing you now to share with you the information they have brought back and to let you have my suggestions on future courses of events.

Mr. Clifford and General Taylor reported that the leaders of each of the countries they visited remain united in their determination to proceed with the war in South Viet-Nam in as vigorous a way as possible. The leaders believe that the pressure against Hanoi and the Viet Cong must be maintained and increased, and they all agreed in principle that additional contributions from all countries will be needed to bring a successful end to the war. No specific commitments were made, but allied nations all agreed to examine urgently and most sympathetically the additional steps that they would be able to take to assist your government and people to defeat the communist aggressors. The decision of the South Vietnamese Government to increase its armed forces by 65,000 men was particularly heartening to them.

I have now presented to the Congress my proposal for imposing a surtax of 10% on the American people to help finance the war in Viet-Nam. We have also announced an additional 45,000 troops for commitment to the fight in South Viet-Nam.² The response of our Asian allies in this struggle will be of great importance to me in persuading the Congress and the American people that these additional sacrifices are part of the common effort to defeat aggression.

Messrs. Clifford and Taylor also discussed with the leaders of our allies the desirability of another summit conference. All agreed that another conference before the end of this year is desirable, but felt that a specific decision on the timing and site should await the conclusion of the important elections to be held in South Viet-Nam.

In this regard my emissaries found in each country great interest in the forthcoming elections in your country. The leaders of our allies were unanimous in their belief that a broadly representative government chosen with wide participation by the South Vietnamese people in free and fair elections will have incalculable value in increasing support for South Viet-Nam among the people in the allied countries as well as throughout the world. I want you to know that such elections will be of tremendous importance to me also in maintaining and in-

² This augmentation of U.S. forces in Vietnam was disclosed when the President's budget plan with a 10 percent surcharge on the tax liabilities of corporations and individuals was submitted to Congress on August 3. See *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1967, pp. 14–16, 948.

creasing support among the American people and in the Congress for increased assistance to your country in its valiant struggle.

I wish to express my appreciation for the courtesies extended to my emissaries, Mr. Clifford and General Taylor. They have been most complimentary in their comments on the reception given them by you and your colleagues. I am highly gratified at the frank and forthright discussions that took place, and am confident that they have contributed to an even closer relationship and understanding between our two countries.

I hope the views in this letter are useful to you and your colleagues and I would be glad to receive your views about any of the matters discussed.

With best regards to yourself and your colleagues and in continuing admiration of the bravery of your people, I am

Sincerely, Lyndon B. Johnson"

2. Signed original being pouched.

Rusk

286. Editorial Note

On August 17 and 18, 1967, Henry Kissinger met with his French intermediaries in the Pennsylvania channel, Herbert Marcovich and Raymond Aubrac. He gave them a message in which the U.S. Government proposed a bombing cessation of North Vietnam if it would "lead promptly to productive discussions" if the North Vietnamese would "not take advantage" of the halt. In light of the significance of the new U.S. position for negotiations, Marcovich and Aubrac agreed to take the message to Hanoi. (Memorandum from Kissinger to Katzenbach, August 21; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Katzenbach Files: Lot 74 D 271, A & M) They decided, however, that the use of the word "if" was too conditional when used in conjunction with the "not take advantage" phrase. They suggested an alternative clause that Kissinger translated as "with the understanding that," a phrase they believed would have greater appeal to the North Vietnamese hierarchy. Kissinger reported the change and recommended its adoption. The Department concurred in the revision. (Telegrams 1997 and 2017 from Paris, both August 17; telegram 2034 from Paris, August 18; and telegram 22969 to Paris, August 18; all *ibid.*, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA) A record of Kissinger's meetings with Aubrac and Marcovich as reported in these telegrams appears in Herring, *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pages 727–729.

287. Notes of Meeting¹

Washington, August 18, 1967.

General Wheeler opened the meeting by showing the President a map of 10 targets. Three of them are proposed for a strike next week. Wheeler said information from the Navy is that the *Oriskany* will be on station tonight. He said Air Force will hit Hanoi thermal power plant tonight. TOT planned time is 1900 tomorrow or 7 p.m. Washington time. If the weather is good, these will go. That will leave three other targets.

McNamara said there are 7 targets authorized and he believes there is a good chance of doing that in the next 5 days.

The President asked how many targets had been approved to get behind us before September.

McNamara said 7 have been approved and he is asking for 3 additional (shown on the map) to be included as a package and thinks there is a good chance of getting them all out of the way by the 24th. McNamara pointed out 3 targets, including target 62 and 59 (depot).

The President asked if target 59 was in a populated area.

McNamara said 59 is a good target but close to a populated area, and that the other 2 were no problem.

Secretary Rusk asked if we have hit 59 before.

McNamara said no.

The President said we hit target 62 before—yes.

General Wheeler showed target 59 location at the northern edge of Hanoi. He calculates 30 civilian casualties.

McNamara said this is a high estimate compared to 5, 10 or 15 casualty estimates on other targets. He said this also shows the target is more critical. He said this is a large depot.

General Wheeler said it is not necessary to approve this target tonight.

The President said he should go ahead and approve it. "If we send a McNamara to talk to Ho Chi Minh, we don't want to approve it after he gets there."

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Meeting Notes File, Folder #4, 1/67–11/67. Top Secret. The notes were typed by Jones and sent to the President on August 19. According to a covering memorandum from Jones to the President, August 19, those present at the meeting were the President, Rusk, McNamara, Wheeler, Rostow, and Christian. The notation "L" on the covering memorandum indicates that the President saw these notes. Jones indicated that the meeting lasted from 8:35 to 9:55 p.m.; President Johnson's diary indicates that it lasted from 8:45 to 9:50 p.m. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary)

Wheeler said the weather forecast is the best in 3 days. The cloud coverage is dissipating.

The President interrupted to ask how many strikes were made in one night.

General Wheeler said 2 or 3, sometimes 4. He said the Hanoi thermal power plant is based on a one strike basis.

Walt Rostow said this strike is not like a bridge,² but it's like hitting a steel yard.

McNamara recommended against approving this target tonight (59-depot). He said the target is too complicated, and it is in a populated area.

Rusk and McNamara agreed that the other two targets were okay.

The President asked how many more targets were in the Hanoi area.

Wheeler said about 10. Some of these he will want to think about because they are in highly populated areas. Wheeler said he'll prune the list of 12 targets in Haiphong area to 10. Wheeler recommended that the President approve 2 targets tonight and consider the other next week.

McNamara agreed delaying the decision on target 59 saying it's not that important as a supply depot and that it will be there, and the strike could come around September 5 or 6.

Wheeler told the President he would come in about Tuesday of next week³ asking that two other targets be hit—Phuc Yen Airfield and Cat Bi in the Haiphong area. Wheeler said he would justify them by Tuesday. He said Phuc Yen is a military airfield and has nothing to do with ICC or with international travelers using the airfield.

The President asked when should we finish up on the targets.

McNamara replied he and Rusk had minor differences in that Rusk thought it should be 24 to 4th and McNamara 25 to 5th. McNamara said however he had no problem accepting Rusk's idea. Rusk said "these fellows will get there on the 25th and it's not good to hit them when they get there."

The President commented that Congress will be recessing about that time.

² U.S. planes bombed the Long Bien bridge in Hanoi on August 11 and 12.

³ August 22.

McNamara said he testifies on the 25th.⁴

The President said they approved all but target 59.

Rusk said we can tell them—don't expect dramatic events on the 24th.

Rusk said a few days ago he felt there was one chance in 100—but today he feels there is one chance in 50 that out of this may come secret contacts. McNamara replied he felt there was one chance in 10 for such results.

Rusk commented that through a Norwegian source, we learned that the North Vietnamese Ambassador to Peking said that any negotiations that would fail would be a disaster.⁵

The President again asked why should we cut out the big ordnance plant—is it used for supplies?

Wheeler said the North Vietnamese are having trouble with supplies. But he said the ordnance plant is not important to the distribution of ammunition. He said this is mostly for rehabilitation of weapons, according to his intelligence, and for the storage of supplies for trucks and weapons.

McNamara summarized the reasons for not striking the depot: a) it is in a highly concentrated population area; b) it is not that important; c) it can't be done in one strike.

The President asked what North Vietnam is short of—petroleum?

Wheeler said food. Wheeler said we have destroyed the major storage areas of petroleum, and that we have put a strain on the distribution of it, but it's carried in small tanks—600 metric tons—partly buried.

The President asked what is the answer to the stalemate issue. Wheeler responded there is no stalemate. The President said that's not

⁴ On August 9 Stennis, Chairman of the Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee, launched hearings into the bombing of North Vietnam. McNamara's testimony on August 25 followed and preceded that of several senior military officers. His testimony supported a continuance of the selective bombing policy while the Generals argued for the lifting of civilian-imposed restrictions on military targets. McNamara stressed that an expanded air effort against North Vietnam was unfeasible due to the minimal requirements necessary for the DRV to continue the struggle in the South and because of the lack of fixed targets in the North. See *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1967*, pp. 961–970. According to McNamara's memoirs, his testimony had a divisive impact upon the top echelons of the Defense Department; see *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam*, pp. 284–291.

⁵ In an August 26 memorandum to Rusk, Hughes observed that as a result of the Loan–Algard dialogue, North Vietnam now appeared ready to engage in preliminary discussions through intermediaries. According to this memorandum, after the June 15 contact with Algard, Loan returned to Hanoi for consultations. Upon the return of both to Peking, they met three times: August 5, 15, and 19. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Ohio)

a good enough answer. He said McNamara gets ridiculed when he says it. The President said he answered it today by saying it was pure Communist propaganda. The President suggested we should have some colorful general like MacArthur with his shirt neck open to go in there and say this is pure propaganda and cite them General Larson's figures.

Wheeler said Larson's report⁶ cited dramatic improvements.

The President commented that Larson's report was three pages. This was boiled down to the point where finally he had five things that took one minute to say. The President also directed Walt Rostow to assign someone to digest and sanitize Westmoreland's weekly report.

The President said to get a colorful general to go to Saigon and argue with them (the press). He said we've got to do something dramatic.

Wheeler said he read Larson's report. He cabled it to Westmoreland and asked for a report along the same lines from the I, III and IV Corps areas.

The President sent J. Jones to get copies of the condensed Larson report for each person present. He read from the report concerning progress in II Corps area. He pointed out that two years ago there were no important roads open, today 90% are. Two years ago almost no operating railroads, today 53% are. The North Vietnam army lost about 7,000 killed in action to about 800 Americans killed in the last two years. The South Korean division has contributed magnificently. In Phu Yen Province, Vietcong controlled 75% of the rice growing land and about 80% of the population in 1965. Now the Province is almost completely under the control of the South Vietnam government.

The President said he used this information and other material in the last few days meetings with many newspaper people, bureau chiefs, columnists, magazine writers and broadcast men. He said he gave backgrounders to them all. He said they all practically surrender. Kilpatrick (*Washington Post*) has a son about ready to go to Vietnam. The President said he cites these reports, some of which are so optimistic that he believes Komer must be writing them. But the President said today we have no songs, no parades, no bond drives, etc. and he said we can't win the war otherwise.

The President said he may have brought on trouble today when he said in his press conference that Congress could take away his Tonkin Gulf Resolution.⁷ He said Fulbright was quoted tonight saying he didn't think that would be practical.

⁶ Not found, but summarized by the President below.

⁷ For the statement, see *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1967*, Book II, pp. 788–796.

Rusk said that Senator Hugh Scott, who has been helpful, suggested that a group of moderates be brought down to the White House for a pep talk.

The President said you can't trust them. He said he met with 48 House Republican freshmen and took all their questions from Vietnam, to elections, to a question from Mrs. Heckler about Brad Morse's proposal. He said they applauded the President twice. He said tonight that they are all out telling what he said. The President relayed that he told the Republican freshmen that in war, politics stops at the water's edge. He said he supported President Eisenhower while Majority Leader 79% on foreign policy, even when the Republican Senate leader refused to help his President. He said he didn't expect these freshmen Republicans to vote 79% for their President (Johnson) but he did expect them to do so for their country.

The President said he also told Dirksen today. Dirksen had told the President he is worried by a great volume of mail he's getting saying someone in Washington is putting the reins on the military commanders and that the war could be won if the military wasn't held back.

The President asked when the bad weather sets in—around the 15th of September?

Wheeler said it starts to flip about the middle of September. From September 15 to October 15 the weather is bad. It stays mostly bad until early or late April.

The President asked if we get out of North Vietnam at that time and where do we put our planes.

Wheeler suggested that the operational commanders be allowed to permit planes to fly north of North Vietnam when the weather is good during this bad season. He also said that flying weather during this time is relatively good in Laos even though weather is bad in North Vietnam. Wheeler said we should apply pressure when we can in North Vietnam during this bad season, especially in the Haiphong–Hanoi area. But Wheeler says we should not set a number of sorties per week during this time.

Rusk commented that "it rains like hell during this period but between times there is some good weather."

Wheeler suggested that during the bad weather period, we have a high level of sorties in Laos and a low level number of sorties in North Vietnam.

McNamara said we have 2600 to 3000 sorties more or an increase in the last six months of about 600% in the Haiphong–Hanoi area.

Wheeler said we've put a heavy stress on their supply and distribution system. Pilots now report that they go into a defended area with

a highway of flak one day and go back the next day and there is almost nothing.

Rusk said, "I'm convinced our bombing program has paid considerable dividends."

Wheeler cited a Navy research paper showing length of time for movement into the south from the Hanoi area for three periods—1965, early 1966, and late 1966.⁸ There is a dramatic increase in the time it takes for this movement. The President asked how Wheeler fared before the Senate Committee and how many were present for the hearing.⁹

Wheeler replied he got a friendly reception. There were seven members there. He started listing Senators Stennis, Symington, Cannon, Margaret Smith, Thurmond and Jack Miller.¹⁰ Wheeler said the committee counsel is Kirbow (Charles) whom Wheeler described as not very good. Wheeler said Stennis likes Kirbow however. Wheeler said Kirbow's work was not thorough and this showed up in the questioning.

Wheeler said he and General Momyer had hoped to do some educating of the members.

McNamara said Wheeler "did a helluva good job." He told them that bombing in the north is not a substitute, but a supplement for the activity in the south. McNamara said "Symington's thesis is that if you bomb hell out of the north you can forget the south." McNamara said he and Wheeler cannot support this.

Wheeler acknowledged that Symington was the roughest questioner at the hearing. Wheeler said Momyer could not support Symington's bombing thesis either. McNamara agreed and said Momyer was excellent at the hearing too.

McNamara said the Senate Committee was trying to prove: 1) we can win it by air and Naval power in the north; 2) there is a gap between the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the Defense Secretary or between the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the President. McNamara acknowledged that "sure there are small differences but these are worked out." McNamara said the proof of what a good job Wheeler did was that there were no stories even though they were out to get stories.

Wheeler said "Symington is on Phuc Yen like a broken record."

⁸ Not found.

⁹ Wheeler appeared before the Stennis subcommittee on August 16.

¹⁰ Senators Howard D. Cannon (D-NV), Margaret Chase Smith (R-ME), Strom Thurmond (R-SC), and Jack Miller (R-IA).

McNamara said there are a total of 27 Migs in North Vietnam. These Migs aren't shooting down our planes. Why risk lives of American pilots over these?

The President asked when would we get our additional 45,000 men in there—in October?

Wheeler answered that a brigade of about 5,000 would be there in October. There will be an additional division around the first of the year, about February, 1968. The rest Westmoreland will get from in-country, etc. and everything should be there by the first of July.

McNamara said Westmoreland will get the 19 battalions by about the first of March.

The President asked when Vietnam will put in their 65,000 additional troops.

Wheeler said probably not until after the elections.

Rusk pointed out that they were freezing some in the ranks now, however.

The President asked if the election is cooling off a bit.

Rusk replied that Leonard Marks received a report from his man in Vietnam—Zorthian—which said there has been a real change in the civilian candidates exploiting the press.

The President suggested that some speeches be worked up to show how the Saigon politicians made dummies of the press corps there and how the politicians were leading the press around by the nose. President said Resnick might make this speech. The President directed Rostow to get up some speeches. The President told J. Jones if Rostow couldn't get this done to have Ben Wattenberg write up a speech.

The President inquired about the observers in Vietnam.¹¹

Rusk replied that Bunker cabled for fewer than 25.

The President said to get a good group ready. He suggested 3 governors, 3 mayors, 3 veterans, 3 newspaper people, 3 radio-tv, 3 from labor. The President recommended the Chairmen of the Armed Forces and Foreign Relations Committees of both Houses to be invited. He said Fulbright won't go any farther than Hawaii.

Rusk added it's not safe for Fulbright to go farther than Hawaii because nobody in Asia wants to see Fulbright.

McNamara suggested three from League of Women Voters go. McNamara also recommended Archbishop Lucey of Texas. He said Lucey is terrific on Vietnam.

¹¹ In an August 11 letter to Rusk, Bui Diem expressed his government's desire to have the U.S. Congress dispatch observers to scrutinize the upcoming South Vietnamese elections. See *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1967*, pp. 950–951.

The President said Republican Governor Rhodes of Ohio is ready to go. President suggested Arthur Fleming, Archbishop Lucey and Billy Graham go.¹²

Wheeler asked if the Secretaries of State and Defense should go.

The President said he didn't want Rusk or McNamara ever to go again. He didn't want any official "above the rank of first lieutenant" to go there because "I just catch hell for two weeks before they go and then after they come back." The President said he counted 15 crises in the last two months. He ticked some off—Westmoreland and troops, McNamara railroad strike, Middle East flareup, riots.

The President said Romney got the jump on us on the riots. Because of this, Romney's popularity goes up and the President's goes down. He said Romney took that one away from us. It was Romney's riot in Romney's state and Romney couldn't handle it even though he preaches local action. It will catch up with them, but Romney stayed with the press while Cy Vance and General Throckmorton did their job.

Wheeler says he counts the war in Vietnam as having gone on for 2 years. He counts the start of the ground war in October 1965.

The President asked how many in South Vietnam—12–15 million?

Wheeler said about 15 million and replied that the Vietcong are about 4 million.

The President wondered aloud, "it seems like with all of the South Vietnamese and all the American troops, we could whip 'em."

The President asked if the ICC will find anything in Cambodia.

"No" Wheeler replied, "it will be a whitewash."

The President asked when will the targets in Vietnam be cleared.

"Never," said Wheeler.

McNamara said "It's movement—about 90% are against moving targets."

The President commented on the picture in today's *New York Times* showing about 20 North Vietnamese troops in water re-building a bridge. He suggested this picture be blown up along with another picture of North Vietnamese troops shooting American soldiers. He said the two pictures can be shown to Congressional committees and you can ask, "do you want their boys doing this (repairing bridges) or shooting your men." (This is in answer to bombing critics.)

McNamara pointed to the map and said that much of the five divisions (North Vietnamese) have moved north of the DMZ—sometimes as much as 100 miles north.

¹² These men were prominent religious leaders.

Wheeler said this is because they have suffered heavy casualties in the DMZ and they are probably short of supplies. He said the drought has hurt them. They probably have moved north for re-training and re-supply.

Rusk advised that Russia may say in the future that the United States always justified its bombing of the north in order to save the lives of American troops at the DMZ who were facing the North Vietnamese divisions. Rusk said Russia may say that we knew those divisions had moved, but yet we continued to bomb.

Wheeler said whole regiments had pulled back. He said that south of the DMZ today, there are not more than 10 or 12,000 North Vietnamese troops. These are mostly for reconnaissance or holding the line.

The President asked if their (North Vietnam) casualties amounted to 100,000.

Rusk replied that the population in the north never hears this.

Wheeler said he had evidence they (North Vietnam) have lowered their draft age to 16. He said a Vietnamese officer touring a battlefield noted that many of the dead were 13, 14 and 15 year old boys.

Rusk said their manpower is committed or being chewed up. He said North Vietnam is having a manpower shortage. Rusk and McNamara said we should watch the 300,000 enemy in the south because that's where the 100,000 casualties are. Rusk said Vietcong morale is low. Wheeler answered the President that of the 300,000 enemy in the south, about 55,000 are North Vietnamese. McNamara commented that these are the ones who have a ticket to death.

The meeting adjourned at 9:55 p.m. The President told Rusk and McNamara he wanted to move on a group of observers tomorrow.

288. Memorandum for the 303 Committee¹

Washington, August 18, 1967.

SUBJECT

Establishment of a Left Wing Political Group in South Vietnam

¹ Source: National Security Council, Records of the 303 Committee, Vietnam 1965–1969. Secret; Eyes Only.

1. Summary

CIA proposes to establish and support covertly a left wing political group in Vietnam. The short run objective of establishing this group is to provide tangible evidence to leftists that political activity of this sort is tolerated in Vietnam. The real purpose is to persuade key members of the Liberation Front that they would have a political role to play on the non-Communist side if they should leave the Front. It is believed that a legal and overt left wing group would have some appeal for a variety of political elements in South Vietnam who are alienated from active political life by the predominantly anti-Communist character of present day Vietnamese politics. This activity will cost initially an estimated [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] which is available in the FY 68 CIA budget. Ambassador Bunker has approved this proposal. Earlier in May 67, it was discussed informally with Secretary McNamara, Mr. Walt Rostow and Mr. Unger of the State Department.² This proposal was approved by Assistant Secretary Bundy on 27 July 1967.

2. Program

In its efforts to penetrate and cause the defection of top level members of the Liberation Front, CIA believes it essential to provide a political inducement as alternative to the positions and political prominence that the target personalities now enjoy within the Front. While it is not possible to offer them positions of comparable rank and influence within the South Vietnamese government, CIA believes that tangible evidence must be provided to these persons that, after defecting from the Front they will be able actively to participate in the political life in South Vietnam. This proposal to establish an overt left wing political group is intended to provide that evidence.

3. Factors Bearing on the Problem

a. Origin of the Requirement

This requirement stems from CIA's efforts to penetrate and cause the defection of top level members of the Liberation Front.

b. Relationship to Previous 303 Committee Actions

None

c. Pertinent U.S. Policy Considerations

Given Hanoi's persistent assertions that the Liberation Front is the only legitimate representative of the South Vietnamese people, anything that can be done to split or otherwise tarnish the image of the Front will undermine the Front's position, both within and without Vietnam, and weaken Hanoi's position correspondingly.

² No record of this meeting has been found.

d. *Operational Objective*

CIA's objective is to provide potential defectors from the Liberation Front with a political home on the non-Communist side of Vietnamese politics, thereby facilitating the process of defecting key leaders and splitting the Front.

e. *Proposal*

CIA proposes to stimulate the formation of a focal point for left wing political sentiment in Saigon, initially through the formation of a left wing study center that would draw on persons of various political viewpoints who share a common alienation from the incumbent power structure and its political orientation. [4 lines of source text not declassified] As the study center legitimizes itself through overt programs relating to Vietnam's current problems, the basis would be provided for the ultimate formation of a leftist political party, hopefully with at least nominal representation within the National Assembly.

f. *Risks Involved*

The risks involved in this operation are two: revelation of U.S. involvement to the Vietnamese government, the North Vietnamese or the Liberation Front or capture of the movement by the Communists. Revelation could result from [1½ lines of source text not declassified] hostile counter-intelligence activity. The CIA assessment [less than 1 line of source text not declassified] is that the risk of revelation from this source is minimal. Similarly, CIA believes that the threat from hostile counter-intelligence activity has been and will continue to be kept within tolerable limits by scrupulous security precautions. Revelation of U.S. involvement would result in some temporary embarrassment, but since the idea of attempting to establish contact with the Front has been cleared with Prime Minister Ky, CIA believes that this extension of the principle should not cause undue problems with the present Vietnamese leadership. The risk of the movement being captured by the Communists and being turned into an additional component of subversion is hard to determine at this time because it is directly related to the success of the venture. Overall, CIA is aware of both the risks and political sensitivity of this proposed activity. In addition to the use of meticulous security precautions in the development of the scheme, CIA will monitor the activity closely and is prepared to alter the pace and time of the effort if we obtain indications that the risks are becoming excessive. We will resubmit the proposal for 303 Committee review if unexpected developments cause the risk factor to increase to a marked degree.

g. *Support Required from Other Agencies*

None

h. *Timing of the Operation*

CIA is prepared to undertake this activity when it is endorsed by the 303 Committee.

4. Coordination

a. U.S. Departments and Agencies

This proposal has been discussed informally with Secretary McNamara, Mr. Unger of the State Department and Mr. Rostow of the White House on 6 May 1967. It was approved by Assistant Secretary Bundy on 27 July 1967 with the understanding that CIA would exercise special care with this sensitive operation.

b. U.S. Ambassador

Ambassador Bunker has approved this proposal.

c. Host Country

Prime Minister Ky and National Police Director Loan are aware of CIA's efforts to contact the top leadership of the Liberation Front, but they have not been and will not be briefed on this proposal.

5. Recommendation

It is recommended that CIA be authorized to proceed immediately with the establishment of the study center and to follow up this beginning with additional steps aimed at the ultimate formation of an overt and legal left wing political party, the pace of activity to be governed by how rapidly the various components of this movement can be brought together. The initial cost will be about [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] for FY 1968 which is available in the CIA budget.³

³ On August 22 the 303 Committee met to consider approval of covert actions in South Vietnam as well as in other areas. Attendees at the meeting included Rostow, Kohler, Nitze, and Helms. The Committee approved the proposal set out in this memorandum as "a worthwhile risk." (Several members had been briefed in Saigon on this project.) According to the record of the meeting, "Rostow observed that although we had wisely abstained from direct government subsidies in the present election campaign, once a viable government had been elected we should consider the subsidy of political party machinery to guarantee some continuity in this attempt at the democratic process." (Memorandum for the Record, August 22; National Security Council, Records of the 303 Committee, 303 Committee Minutes, August 22, 1967) In October the Committee authorized the spending of [*text not declassified*] to aid Dai Viet and Vietnamese Confederation of Trade Unions (CVT) candidates for the National Assembly. In November the Committee also approved [*text not declassified*] for the development of political parties in Vietnam. The fund was to be administered by Bunker and directed toward "nascent political parties and individual Assembly members." (Memorandum from Donald MacDonald, Deputy Director for Coordination, INR, to George Denney, Deputy Director, INR, July 26, 1968; Department of State, INR/IL Historical Files, East Asian Country File, Vietnam 1968)

289. Telegram From the Central Intelligence Agency to the Station in Saigon¹

Washington, August 19, 1967, 11:40 a.m.

For Mr. Hart only. The Department of State has asked that we pass the following message from the Secretary to Ambassador Bunker. Please cable confirmation of the Ambassador's receipt of this message.

Begin text: To Ambassador Bunker from the Secretary of State:

1. Your proposal to provide financial support to Ky and Huong campaigns has been carefully considered.² After examining advantages and disadvantages we have concluded it is best to avoid such involvement.

2. Ky seems to have more than enough money already and we do not wish develop this sort of relationship with him. The success of your private advisory relationship [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] is well established and fruitful without such involvement.

3. As for Huong, we have serious doubts that passing money in way described could be kept secret. We also wonder whether Huong is aware of request. We suspect his associate who made contact with Embassy officer may be shopping around without Huong's knowledge. In any event we do not wish to engage in this sort of operation.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 14 VIET S. Secret; Immediate; Most Sensitive. An August 19 covering note from Carver to Read indicates that the telegram was sent via CAS channels, although no telegram number appears on the attached draft.

² See Document 282.

290. Telegram From the Embassy in France to the Department of State¹

Paris, August 19, 1967, 1023Z.

2089. Pennsylvania from Kissinger. Literally eyes only Secretary McNamara. Have told friends that effective August 24 there will be no-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 27-14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA. Top Secret; Flash; Nodis. Received at 6:49 a.m. Kissinger met with his contacts once in the morning and once in the evening on August 19.

ticeable change in bombing pattern around Hanoi without giving geographic extent. Have avoided precision about time limit referring only to complex considerations to avoid impression of ultimatum. If mission succeeds, time limit is academic. If mission fails, resumption can be blamed on Hanoi's intransigence.²

Am delaying my departure till Sunday³ noon so that I can be specific about time limit should you desire. Duty officer Embassy will know where reach me. Friends now planning to leave August 24.

I will arrive in Boston 15:35 Sunday on AF 019 and try call you at office or home.

Wallner

² On August 19 air strikes within a 10 nautical mile zone around Hanoi were suspended for the period August 24–September 4. The suspension was extended indefinitely on September 1.

³ August 27.

291. Text of Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, August 21, 1967.

Text of Cable From Saigon (3644)

Following is the text of identical letters (except for the difference in titles) dated August 21 from Prime Minister Nguyen Cao Ky to Vice President Humphrey (as President of the Senate) and Speaker McCormack, which were sent to Ambassador Bunker on August 21 by the

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Memos to the President, Vol. II, 8/3-27/67. Confidential; Exdis. The telegram was retyped for the President; in an August 21 covering memorandum transmitting the retyped copy to the President, McPherson wrote: "It is a long but rather eloquent explanation of Vietnamese politics and of the Prime Minister's attitude. It is a plea for understanding and tolerance. And it notes that the Vietnamese do not need 'any lesson in honesty and patriotism from any quarter.' It is clearly designed to meet Congressional criticisms. I thought you would like to read it. I assume the Senate and House will give it appropriate exposure." The notation "L" on the covering memorandum indicates that the President saw the telegram. In his 17th weekly report to the President, Bunker noted that peace had become the major issue in the South Vietnamese Presidential campaign. (Telegram 3824 from Saigon, August 23; Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 8B(1) [A] Bunker's Weekly Report to the President; printed in full in Pike, *The Bunker Papers*, pp. 128–137)

Prime Minister with the request that they be forwarded to the addressees. The Prime Minister states in his letter to the Ambassador that he has “deemed it proper to reaffirm to the American Congress the principles which inspire the conduct of national affairs by my Government as Vietnam is on the eve of acceding to democracy.” No mention is made of publication plans. Signed originals follow by pouch.

Begin text:

Dear Mr. President,

I take the liberty to write to you at a time when the events in my country occasion passionate debates in the Congress of the United States. Since the American and Vietnamese nations are together defending freedom, and are consenting to tremendous sacrifices, I deem it my duty to affirm again the principles which command the conduct of national affairs by my Government.

The defense of freedom in Vietnam requires more than our joint efforts at war, it involves first and foremost our mutual commitment to the achievement of democracy and social justice. Should we stray from that basic commitment, or should you misconstrue our purposes, our alliance would indeed be in jeopardy.

As my Government is nearing the completion of its term of duty, I sincerely feel that we have dispatched our task with honesty and effectiveness under most difficult circumstances. I take special pride in the fact that we have successfully started the course toward democracy and equality for a society which was imprisoned within the deep walls of feudalism, corruption and intolerable social discrepancies. In spite of war, subversion and several grave crises, my Government has undertaken to organize five nationwide elections of vital importance within about a year's time: elections for the Constituent Assembly in September 1966, elections for hamlet and village administration in April–May 1967, Presidential and Senatorial elections next September, and elections for the Lower House next October. I do not know of any better way to warrant our determination to stay the course toward democracy. For it would be proper for all concerned to acknowledge the painful dilemma of our nation, torn between the dream to attain the integrity of democratic life and the necessity to fight for survival. We have lost many of our people, our soldiers, our cadresmen in the past elections, and undoubtedly we shall lose many more in the coming weeks; we must devote a great deal of resources to the exercise of democracy which are badly needed on the battlefield; we run the risk of subversion and division at a time when the nation must unite in the face of the enemy. Yet we have all accepted the challenge without a shadow of reluctance.

It seems a cruel irony that some of our friends chose this very moment to voice doubt of our sincerity.

Perhaps the fact that my Government includes officers of the Armed Forces leads to misgivings, for I know of the inherent distrust toward military government in the advanced societies. But in our present historical context, the Vietnamese Armed Forces are of a very particular nature: 700,000 of our young men are under arms in a nation of 15 million people. Our Armed Forces are not composed of militarists or people inclined to the use of force or violence, but of all the generations of Vietnamese within the age of offering the fullest measure of service to their imperiled fatherland. They are the present and the future of our nation.

Furthermore, my Government did not seize power; it was a civilian government which, unable to resolve instability and division, passed on to the Armed Forces the burden of preserving the nation from collapsing. We then formed a mixed team of civilian and military leaders, decided that our term of duty was to be a transitional one, and set out to establish the very rapid time table for the advent of representative government. We are now reaching the final stage of that time table.

Of course, two years are a very short period of time. We are convinced that we have engaged our country on the right path, but we are also aware that the tasks which we have begun, such as rural development, reorganization of the administration and of the Army, reinforcement of the national economy . . . need to be continued. That is why, in good conscience, we deem it our duty to run for offices in due democratic process. We hope that the people of Vietnam will entrust us with further responsibilities on the basis of our past performances. But should the people decide otherwise, we shall readily accept their verdict.

I am particularly sad to hear accusations that the Vietnamese Armed Forces will resort to coups in the event the election returns should be unfavorable to us. We have devoted the finest hours of the past two years to bringing about the first democratic institutions in our country, we shall not be the ones to destroy them. I have repeatedly warned our soldiers, our civil servants, our cadremen against rigging the elections in any manner, for I think that dishonest elections would deprive our country of democracy for a long period of time. In 1963, the people and the Army overthrew a dictatorial government which was issued from dishonest elections.

That a few press correspondents should misquote my word of caution against unfair elections and make it sound like a threat of coup was, after all understandable. But for a moment, I felt very discouraged to see some of the best friends of my country give credence to those inaccurate reports. Time and again, I have proved that I am capable of placing the interest of our nation above all possible personal ambition: the decision I made on the 30th of June to withdraw from

the Presidential race and to seek the Vice Presidency instead, was another instance of my sincerity.

I see therefore no reason for attributing to ill faith on the part of my Government the difficulties that the candidates may encounter in their campaigning. My country is short on physical facilities, several of our airfields are still unsafe, and the wind blows where it may . . . in my opinion, a dignified attitude for those among us whose ambition to be public servants by popular choice should be to endure those misfortunes and persevere in seeking the support of the electorate, and not to display resentment against the adverse conditions which prevail for our entire people. In the meanwhile, I am satisfied that our Government has done its very best to give all candidates a fair share of the means for campaigning. The same amount of money is allotted to all tickets. The Government television and radio allow equal time to all candidates in direct broadcast, and anybody in Vietnam can testify that those means are used at their fullest capacity by our opponents, the Vietnamese press is free, and, in part, quite virulently anti-Governmental; on the other hand the foreign press is at full liberty to cover the campaign and the forthcoming elections.

If by the standards of a country with a long experience in the exercise of democracy, and free from the predicaments of war and underdevelopment, our elections still present serious shortcomings, I am the first Vietnamese to deplore that situation. But I can say without any doubt in my conscience that my Government does not deserve any lesson in honesty and patriotism from any quarter.

I am afraid that persistent criticism without substantiated evidence on the part of some prominent American figures may, in the long run, impair the harmony of our joint efforts. The Vietnamese are a proud people, they will accept any amount of tribulations and suffering, but their dead count as much as the dead from all the friendly lands, and they will admit no discrimination in all the men's supreme tribute to freedom and human dignity.

I see an urgent need, Mr. President, for all of us to keep an appropriate perspective in the partnership between nations, large and small, which are in pursuit of a common ideal; for intemperate reliance upon the physical scale of strength would be the negation of that very ideal.

Mr. President, may I ask you to convey my letter to all the distinguished members of the Senate of the United States.

I stand in profound respect for the great traditions of democracy and justice embodied in your institutions. I greatly value the support of the Congress of the United States for the cause of Vietnam, and I am always ready to discuss in total candor with the distinguished Sena-

tors who wish to further examine the developments concerning the common endeavor of our two nations.

Sincerely yours,

(signed) Air Vice Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky

*End Text.*²

² Humphrey's reply, transmitted in telegram 15089 to Saigon, August 31, reads: "I thank you for your letter of August 21, which I have conveyed to the members of the United States Senate as you requested. We share the view that our joint efforts require a mutual commitment to the achievement of democracy and social justice. The elections for the Constituent Assembly and village and hamlet councils over the last year, and the forthcoming Presidential and National Assembly elections this fall are impressive evidence of the desire of the people of Viet-Nam to achieve representative self-government. The desire of the Vietnamese people to build democratic self-government while at the same time having to fight so bitterly to defend it inspires the admiration of people in many parts of the world. Please accept, Mr. Prime Minister, on behalf of the Senate my gratitude for the consideration you have shown the members in writing to them." (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 15–1 VIET S) A reply by McCormack, transmitted in telegram 29077 to Saigon, August 29, assured the Prime Minister that the House "concern" was only that the "impressive pace of evolutionary political development" established by Ky and others "shall be sustained." (Ibid.)

292. Memorandum of Conversation Between the Ambassador at Large (Harriman) and Secretary of Defense McNamara¹

Washington, August 22, 1967.

Bob McNamara stopped by in order to give me Jackie's letter to Sihanouk with the request that it get to him and that we get an answer as soon as possible.²

On Vietnam, he agreed on two subjects:

1. After elections, we must tie our bombing and other military policy to the objective of negotiations. He minimized the importance of these recent targets, when I complained that hitting Hanoi just at this time with the Kissinger business going on could be misinterpreted and that if we really wanted to negotiate we would have to adjust our bomb-

¹ Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Harriman Papers, Special Files, Public Service, Chronological Files, August 1967 General. Personal and Top Secret; For Personal Files Only.

² Reference is to correspondence between Sihanouk and the widow of former President John F. Kennedy relating to a visit to Cambodia which she eventually made during November.

ing program accordingly. He fully agreed and said these targets were of no real value. He told me that he personally had dictated the message that K brought to A and M.³

2. I said if we are to take up the question of negotiations seriously, we must decide on what our objective is. We could not get an unconditional surrender. He agreed, and said the proposal that came to the Norwegian Ambassador to Peking sounded good.⁴ I said, "You mean the proposal for a coalition government, including the VC, which would be non-communist and neutral?" He said, "Yes. We must make up our minds that the only way to settle this is by having a coalition government. We cannot avoid that." I said I agreed that some compromise was necessary, but that was not the view of Dean Rusk, and after the elections this issue must be brought to a head. I told him that if he made the issue, I would support him. He said, "Well, let's talk about it right after the election."

W. Averell Harriman⁵

³ Reference is to Aubrac and Marcovich; see Document 293.

⁴ See footnote 5, Document 287.

⁵ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

293. Memorandum for the Record¹

Washington, August 22, 1967.

The Secretary gave me the following instructions with respect to handling the special message for Hanoi. These instructions emerged from the luncheon at the White House:²

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, S-AH Files: Lot 71 D 461, Kissinger Project. Secret; Nodis. Prepared by Chester Cooper.

² The President's weekly luncheon with his principal foreign policy advisers was held on August 22 from 1:20 to 3:10 p.m. Attending the meeting were the President, Rusk, McNamara, Wheeler, Helms, Walt Rostow, and George Christian. (Johnson Library, President's Daily Diary) No record of the meeting has been found.

1. If A & M get their visas they should go according to plan.³
2. If they are refused their visas they should deliver their message to the North Vietnamese representative in Paris.⁴
3. Algard should go to Hanoi as soon as convenient.⁵
4. We will brief Algard in Oslo before he leaves.
5. Algard will be given the same message as A & M regardless of whether A & M deliver their message in Hanoi or in Paris.

[Note: One question of timing remains: presumably we would want to avoid having *both* A & M and Algard in Hanoi at the same time. But we can deal with this when we hear more from A & M re their visas.]⁶

CLC

³ On August 18 Aubrac and Marcovich (A and M) sent a message to Hanoi requesting travel visas. Their initial application was refused on August 21; the same day they again submitted an urgent request for a visa. This appeal was turned down on August 31. On August 25 they asked Mai Van Bo to send the message that they carried, along with the information that the bombing would be restricted for 10 days, directly to Bo's superiors in Hanoi. See Herring, *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 730–733.

⁴ Kissinger had added a verbal message that he had the French intermediaries transmit, which included the following stipulations: "1. The United States is interested in the declarations of the chiefs of the government of Hanoi as transmitted by Kissinger. 2. Washington is handling this problem confidentially and requests that Hanoi do so likewise. 3. Washington is particularly interested in the possibility that Hanoi envisages direct, secret discussions. 4. [Recent] attacks on the dikes were accidental. 5. Washington has prepared the [message putting forth the formulation for the halt] and requests that M and A transmit it in person to Pham Van Dong as soon as possible. 6. If Hanoi desires additional commentary on the message, Washington is ready to send a special representative to supplement the information directly and secretly. Suggest, for example, Vientiane, or Moscow, or Paris. 7. It is acceptable to Washington if Hanoi wishes to utilize the Kissinger–Aubrac/Marcovich channel or wishes to send another message." (Memorandum prepared by Kissinger, no date, as transmitted to Rostow, September 5; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA)

⁵ See footnote 5, Document 287.

⁶ Brackets in the source text.

294. Notes of Meeting¹

Washington, August 24, 1967, 5:33–6:25 p.m.

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH SECRETARY RUSK SECRETARY McNAMARA GENERAL HAROLD JOHNSON GENERAL JOHN P. McCONNELL UNDER SECRETARY PAUL NITZE

The issue was whether or not to authorize air strikes of the Phuc Yen Air Field.²

General Johnson: Admiral Sharp has strongly recommended again an air strike of Phuc Yen. He still recommends Gia Lam. General Wheeler has recommended Phuc Yen and hitting Gia Lam after warning. General McConnell and I recommend the strike.

President: How many aircraft are there?

General Johnson: At one point there were 25–27. Many have gone back into China.

General McConnell: There are approximately 11 there now, latest intelligence and photos show.

President: Why is it so important to get 11 airplanes?

General McConnell: There are three types of defensive problems we encounter: 1. MIGs 2. Antiaircraft guns 3. SAMs. Pilots concerned with all three. Pilots have to watch for all three. If we can eliminate one (MIGs) we can perform more effectively. The pilots will have a better chance to survive.

Pilots have a strong frustration against our not knocking this MIG base out. If we could, it would permit us to focus on the other defensive systems. It hurts to see those planes on the runways and not be able to strike them, yet they appear shortly afterwards firing at our planes.

President: Can you knock out more on the ground than you lose by going in after them.

McConnell: We estimate three to five losses.

President: What about restrikes?

McConnell: We may have to.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings. Top Secret; Eyes Only. The meeting was held in the White House.

² The Phuc Yen airfield was the major staging area for MiG attacks on U.S. planes.

McNamara: We have 85–23 ratio of enemy loss to friendly loss in air. We have a better ratio in air on kills than we would have on this one.

President: Bob, are you for this.

McNamara: No, Mr. President, I am not. It will cost more pilots than it will save. It puts more pressure on the Chinese and the Soviets to react. Even assuming that MIGs affect the missions, their effects are small. They will move their planes to Gia Lam, and we won't have accomplished anything.

General McConnell: It will make the problem a lot simpler (if we attack Phuc Yen). It will give the men more confidence. All the senior military people recommend it unanimously.

McNamara: That is true, the senior military people do recommend it without exception. The pilots have been exposed for two years. For them, it is SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) to attack the bases from which the planes originate. The pilots feel strongly on the issue too. I feel they are wrong. There are very significant risks associated with it.

President: Paul (Nitze), how do you feel?

Nitze: Same as Secretary McNamara, except for different reasons. On purely military basis, we won't get many planes on the ground. They will go to another base, or operate out of China. Although it may improve morale, when you add up all the factors it is not worth it. But I am not sure that it would affect the Soviet risk of intervention.

McNamara: But it is added pressure. We do not know where the breaking point is. If we accomplish our objective with this base, we will pay a price. The Soviets would have lost some of their MIG defense they are supplying. They would rebuild, and add more support. This also applies to China.

General McConnell: This base contains maintenance facilities, control installations, and good POL facilities.

President: I'm inclined to hit it. How do you feel Dean (Rusk)?

Secretary Rusk: I have some problems with this. Why can't a cap handle it?

General McConnell: It would take more aircraft. We would have to have a larger cap.

Secretary Rusk: On Phuc Yen, there is a thin margin. It would be a serious problem if the planes had to operate out of China. In the minds of many people, this would be Chinese intervention. It also would be a question of how you deal with those MIGs coming in from China.

It would have to be a campaign against the base, including several attacks to take it out effectively. It would be costly. If you gentlemen (the generals) will excuse my putting back on my uniform for a

minute, it is my opinion that the military advantages do not outweigh the political disadvantages.

General McConnell: I'd rather face them from China. They would have only one half the time over target because of fuel.

Secretary Rusk: This would be considered Chinese intervention. We have braced ourselves for a major reaction from the Soviets and the Chinese. We've got to brace ourselves on this one. This doesn't mean that we should cut and run. But we should know what the margins are. The losses would not be made up with what we gain.

In my opinion, we can control this two ways: First, with caps; Second, with air-to-air combat.

For these reasons, Mr. President, I recommend against it.

The President: Well, that's two for and two against. As I see it, by some estimates, we could lose 11 planes for the 11 planes we knock out. We could have many civilian casualties because of the location (This was pointed out by showing the President a map of the area before the actual meeting started). We may have to hit it every three days or so to effectively knock it out. There are possible problems with China and Russia. It could be handled by other means.

For those reasons, I am not going to authorize it today. Personally, I am inclined to hit it. I know that it is a constant danger and a constant threat. I think we have to get in now and knock out everything we can get. We have got to prevent our being hobbled out there. We also have problems here at home. It is better to hit these targets now than wait. So much of the people believe this pure propaganda which is coming out about the war.

We can't take it much longer. It really becomes a question of whether you hit Phuc Yen or pull out. We have anticipated this condition, Bob, for many months.

My instinct is to take it out. You know that I have great confidence in each of you. But you divide, 2–2, and throw it in my lap.

Secretary McNamara, you go back with General Johnson and General McConnell and notify the field commanders that this MIG base is under "serious consideration." But tell the men that it may honestly cause us serious political problems. Tell them you believe you can get the same results with less costs by using the caps. Point out the Rusk arguments about this. Then, let me know what their reaction is.

It was agreed this was the best course of action.

The President asked about putting former Ambassador Lodge in charge of the election observer team going to Vietnam. All agreed he was an excellent choice.

The President asked General Johnson to provide a more up-to-date explanation of why the two U.S. jets went over the Chinese border.

295. Text of Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, August 26, 1967.

4139. 1. I saw Prime Minister Ky morning Aug 26 shortly before his full-dress press conference at which apparently the cabinet was going to be present. He said the other generals were in field uniform, Ky with his customary pink scarf.

2. I asked Ky how the electoral campaign was going and what he thought the prospects for their ticket were. Ky said it was going well and that he had also had a very good day yesterday in Long Xuyen Province. Ky claimed he had been urging Thieu to go on joint appearances with the civilian candidates and was sorry that Thieu had not gone to Rach Gia but he had cancelled out at the last minute on ground he was not feeling well. He said he would have gone in his place if he had known in time. Ky added that he would probably accompany the other candidates to Da Nang and Hue, in fact fly them up there in his DC-6, as he had threatened some days ago to do.

3. I asked Ky about the recent charges by Ha Thuc Ky that members of Dai Viet Party were being arrested and harassed in Hue. Ky said there was a continuing problem there, and the Revolutionary Dai Viets, the VNQDD and the extremist Buddhists were carrying on a constant factional struggle among themselves. He said this particular struggle was not necessarily related to the elections and he thought the Buddhists were trying to stir up the pot in whatever way they could. He went on to say that there had apparently been a meeting here of the An Quang Buddhists who had tried to get the civilian candidates to agree on a single competing ticket against Thieu and Ky, but they had not succeeded. Ky doubted very much that the civilian candidates would get together in this way.

4. With respect to the various charges against the government, Ky said there had been no substantiation of them as yet and the general election campaign committee had not received any formal complaints. He characterized Dzu's charges against the government as "wild" and then described the background to his comment to the press that he would build him a cage.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Memos to the President, Vol. II, 8/3–27/67. Secret; Exdis. No transmittal time is indicated. Repeated to CINCPAC. The text printed here was retyped for the President; in a covering note transmitting it to the President, August 26, Jorden wrote: "The attached cable from Ambassador Bunker reporting on his latest talk with Prime Minister Ky is of interest. The Prime Minister's estimate of the Thieu-Ky vote is going down, but he is still confident of winning."

5. In terms of the election outcome, Ky said he thought their ticket would get about 40–45 percent of the vote and he considered this about right, since a higher percentage might be misinterpreted. He also said that the Vietnamese people were very independent in their voting choice and it was difficult to predict the outcome with any accuracy. He added that support for the civilian candidates were coming up and he did not think they would withdraw from the race. Ky said that in his recent trip to the Delta he found that many of the people there did not even know the candidates by name, adding that he was only known to them as “Mr. Moustache”.

6. I asked Ky about the reports that dismissals of ARVN officers for corruption or inefficiency would take place in the immediate future. Ky said this action would not be started before the elections, but thereafter. He said they had evidence of corruption on some 20 to 30 general officers. General Cao Van Vien would point out to the individual officers that the government and the Armed Forces Inspectorate have evidence on hand regarding such corruption and would then permit them to resign rather than be formally charged. Ky added that when it was merely a question of inefficiency, the GVN would try to help out the officers in finding new civilian jobs. Some 6 or 7 generals have already been retired and are drawing pay, but since they are blocking promotion for more promising officers they would be asked to resign as well. Ky said that all of this had been discussed and a final decision taken at a meeting of the top generals two days ago.

7. *Comment:* Ky's estimate of the probable percentage that he and Thieu will get indicates that he has lowered his sights from the 50–60 percent that he projected a week or so ago. His comments and general attitude belie the many rumors around town that he would sabotage their ticket or throw his weight to a civilian ticket such as Suu–Dan. Ky was in good form and cheerful spirits and apparently eager to take on the press in full array after our talk.

Bunker

296. Editorial Note

On August 26, 1967, the Embassy in Saigon completed a study entitled "Blueprint for Vietnam." It was an extensive analysis that contained a comprehensive statement of policy and recommendations for success in Vietnam. Deputy Ambassador Locke initiated and directed it; Ambassador Bunker and the Mission Council approved the idea. Although copies went to S/S and EA, the report was sent exclusively to President Johnson, Secretary of State Rusk, and Secretary of Defense McNamara.

The "Blueprint" set forth a list of policies for the Embassy in Saigon to follow in order to encourage progress in the newly-elected Vietnamese Government after the September 3 elections. The authors' general assessment, comprising the first chapter, reads:

"Progress in the war has been steady on all fronts. We can defeat the enemy by patient, continued, and concerted effort. The way to do this is for the GVN and its allies (a) to reinforce and accelerate the progress already made; (b) to markedly improve the interdiction of infiltration of North Vietnamese troops and supplies; (c) to upgrade, accelerate, and coordinate the pacification program in the countryside; and (d) to maintain political and economic stability and support the development of the constitutional process.

"There is no magic way to insure quick victory short of an unacceptable degree of risk of war with Communist China or the Soviet Union. One cannot predict when the increased pressure and the increased cost to North Viet-Nam will result in either the quiet withdrawal of their military forces from the South or their decision to enter into negotiations. However, one can say that the greater the pressure and cost to the enemy, the more likely and the sooner will one of these events transpire.

"The military, pacification, political and economic programs are interrelated. The greater the progress in pacification the less will be the popular support for the VC/NVA, the less their prospects for a combined military-political victory, and therefore the less their capacity to justify their actions in their own Marxist terms. The greater the military progress, the more rapid and successful will be the progress in pacification. As the main force war progresses and additional territory and people are returned to GVN control, both military/paramilitary forces and civilian representatives of the governmental agencies must move into the newly pacified regions to insure their integration into the national community and to prevent a return of Viet Cong control through the infrastructure remnants or application of force by Viet Cong guerrillas. Revival of the economy will make the people in the countryside, as well as in the cities, less responsive to the VC.

"We still have a long way to go. Much of the country is still in VC hands, the enemy can still shell our bases and commit acts of terrorism in the securest areas, VC units can still mount large scale attacks, most of the populace has not actively committed itself to the Government, and the VC infrastructure still exists throughout the country. Nevertheless, the situation has steadily improved since the spring of 1965. The following favorable circumstances may create a climate where increased pressure could cause the enemy to reassess his position:

"1) South Viet-Nam now has a constitution, freely elected village and hamlet officials, and the beginnings of local self government. It is on the threshold of having an elected President, Vice President, Senate and Assembly. If these elections are free and fair, and result in a combined military-civilian government, including broad elements of the national, social and political structure, they should (a) increase political stability; (b) facilitate adoption of a program of modernization and reform of the GVN and the armed forces, aimed at greatest efficiency and social justice; and (c) bring into office a government which has a more widely accepted mandate and is thus in a stronger position in any negotiations with Hanoi and the NLFVC. On the negative side, the existence of a strong Assembly may make it more difficult to get U.S. policy suggestions accepted and implemented promptly, particularly where legislation is required.

"2) This is becoming more and more a North Vietnamese war. Recruiting by the VC in the South is increasingly difficult and has fallen off by about half. Our military operations have made activities of VC main force and local force units, guerrillas, and the civilian infrastructure more difficult, and in many areas have resulted in scarcity of supplies and lowering of VC morale. Population movement to more secure GVN areas is further reducing VC logistical support. Higher VC taxes, conscription by the VC, and indiscriminate acts of terror have eroded their popular appeal. Although the VC still have a strong infrastructure, built up over the years, it has been seriously weakened in important areas and its support is increasingly based on fear and personal advantage and less on idealism and popular support. Thus, the climate for pacification is better than in the past.

"3) Infiltration by sea has been slowed to a trickle. Infiltration through the DMZ should be hampered by the strong point obstacle system now under construction. Interdiction both in Laos and in North Viet-Nam and our entire bombing program in North Viet-Nam are becoming increasingly effective although substantial infiltration is continuing.

"4) Although basic economic problems remain unsolved, and basic reforms in taxation, banking, and the economic structure are es-

sential, the economy in South Viet-Nam is moving forward. The real income of the laboring classes in the city has increased and that of the farmer is now beginning to increase; inflation—while still present—is not the threat of a year ago; the Port of Saigon is operating well; other ports have been developed and road and waterway security has been improved, resulting in a significant increase in traffic.

“Now that the initiative is ours and the enemy is beginning to hurt, maximum pressure must be maintained on him by (a) intensifying military activity in the South; (b) developing new methods of interdicting infiltration; (c) bombing all targets in the North connected with the enemy’s war effort that do not result in unacceptable risk of uncontrolled escalation; (d) accelerating the program of pacification (including better security, more effective attacks on the infrastructure, stepped up National Reconciliation and Chieu Hoi programs, a greater involvement of the people in solving their own problems at the village and hamlet level); (e) encouraging reforms in the government structure and continued improvement in the armed forces; (f) attacking the problem of corruption; (g) using influence to effect a strong, freely elected government with political stability; and (h) taking actions necessary to the continued growth and stability of the economy.

“Our detailed recommendations will be given with respect to each subject in the following chapters.”

The recommendations of the “Blueprint” basically amounted to a continuance of existing civil, political, and military programs designed to achieve victory over the Viet Cong insurgency in South Vietnam. In specific terms, the “Blueprint” endorsed the troop augmentation requested by General Westmoreland, the reduction of restrictions on the bombing campaign against North Vietnam, the possible but necessary extension of the war into Laos and Cambodia, and using U.S. influence to reform and reinvigorate the new Vietnamese Government into prosecuting the war more effectively and broadening its political base. Copies of the “Blueprint” are in the Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 8B(1) 6/67–11/67, Bunker’s Weekly Report to the President; National Archives Records Administration, RG 59, S/S–S Files: Lot 70 D 48, Misc. VN Rpts. & Briefing Books, Blueprint for Vietnam; and *ibid.*, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S.

In telegram 31484 to Saigon, September 2, the Department requested that Locke return from Vietnam for a week-long “review” of the “Blueprint.” (*Ibid.*, POL 15 VIET S) During his visit to Washington, Locke briefed the President, Rusk, McNamara, and Walt Rostow on the “Blueprint” during a meeting on September 6 from 10:15 to 11:02 a.m. at the White House. (Johnson Library, President’s Daily Diary) No record of the meeting has been found. According to a September 5 memorandum to the President, Rostow advised Johnson to inform

Locke that any decision relating to the recommendations of the "Blueprint" would come after review of the document by Rusk and McNamara. (Ibid., National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Memos to the President, Vol. 4) In a memorandum submitted to Rostow on September 11, Locke described the "Blueprint" as "not a strategy statement or an action plan" but an outline of the means for advancing toward American goals in Vietnam which required "priorities," "time-phasing," and "costing." (Ibid., Vol. 3A, Misc. Memos) Locke discussed the report in depth with the President during a late dinner on September 11. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary) Although no record of the meeting has been found, presumably Locke sought approval for the contemplated programs at that time.

In a memorandum to McNamara on September 12, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Paul Warnke advised against endorsement of the report, given its omission of any discussion of the serious weaknesses that plagued the South Vietnamese Government. In any case, Locke needed "only to obtain general approval for the Mission to undertake the courses of action outlined in the report." (Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OSD Files: FRC 71 A 4546, Country Files, Vietnam 1967, 320.4–333) In a memorandum to Rostow, September 12, William J. Jorden of the National Security Council Staff also voiced some concern over Presidential endorsement, noting that "a good deal more work needs to be done on this before the President is asked to sign off. " (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vol. 4, Misc. Memos) Like Jorden, Robert N. Ginsburgh of the NSC Staff, in a memorandum of September 7, also noted staffing and priority problems with the paper, but argued that it would be "most useful" for demonstrating U.S. plans and policy in Vietnam and for its overall guidance for the Embassy in Saigon. (Ibid.)

The "Blueprint" was also one of the topics for discussion at the regular Tuesday Luncheon meeting on September 12. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary) No record of this meeting nor any record of formal Presidential approval of the "Blueprint" has been found.

297. Telegram From the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker) to the President's Special Assistant (Rostow)¹

Saigon, August 29, 1967, 0710Z.

CAS 273. To the White House, eyes only Walt Rostow.

1. Bob Komer and I wish bring to your attention potentially serious problem created by new NIE now on verge of completion.²

2. Despite thorough re-analysis by now massive MACV intelligence machine which has brought MACV position much closer to that of CIA, the latter's experts appear insistent on bringing out an estimate which will make enemy strength 430–490,000 instead of the range centering on 298,000 developed by MACV.

3. CIA does this chiefly by adding to strength figures some 120,000 so-called self-defense and secret self-defense forces, which are not organized military units at all but rather a shadowy, mostly unarmed part-time hamlet defense element of women, children, and old men on which we have very little evidence and which is so inconsequential and rarely encountered by us as not to warrant inclusion in enemy strength. In last analysis only armed men plus structure controlling and supporting them should validly be included.

4. I need hardly mention the devastating impact if it should leak out (as these things so often do) that despite all our success in grinding down VC/NVA here, CIA figures are used to show that they are really much stronger than ever. Despite all caveats, this is inevitable conclusion which most of press would reach.

5. Westy has gone back hard at Buss Wheeler on this and I intend to mention it to the President in my coming weekly. The credibility gap created would be enormous, and is quite inconsistent with all the hard evidence we have about growing enemy losses, declining VC recruiting and the like.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, White House Cables–Back Channels–Incoming, Outgoing. Top Secret; Eyes Only. Sent via CAS channels.

² See Document 397. At this time, SNIE 14–3–67, an estimate of enemy strength, was scheduled for release on September 1.

298. Memorandum From Director of Central Intelligence Helms to President Johnson¹

Washington, August 29, 1967.

SUBJECT

Effects of the Intensified Air War Against North Vietnam

Summary

The intensified air war against North Vietnam has shown increased effectiveness in several ways: (1) the cost of bomb damage in the past four months almost equals the total damage inflicted in 1966; (2) most of modern industry is now at a standstill, thus neutralizing a decade of economic growth; (3) the rail transport system is now coping with its most serious disruption to date; (4) the port of Haiphong is confronted with a growing resupply burden; and (5) the regime has been forced to adopt a more rigid evacuation program, now involving essential as well as non-essential activities and personnel. At the same time, however, Hanoi continues to meet the needs of the Communists in South Vietnam and essential military and economic traffic continues to move.

1. Since March 1967 over 10,000 attack sorties per month have been flown against targets in North Vietnam, compared to 6,500 per month during the same period in 1966. An increased hammering is being given to the more lucrative targets in the north. During January–March 1967, less than 10 percent of all attack sorties were flown in Route Package VI; in July the share had increased to 33 percent. Since March, 78 important targets have been struck for the first time, including 25 SAM sites and 29 targets within 10-mile radii of Hanoi and Haiphong.

2. The intensified air war has increased North Vietnam's economic losses and compounded management and logistical problems. The direct cost of damage to economic and military targets during March–July 1967—about \$110 million—was almost equal to the total damage inflicted in 1966.

3. Damage to electric power generating facilities has been particularly severe and brought much of the country's modern industry to a standstill. All of the central generating plants in the main

¹ Source: Central Intelligence Agency, DCI (Helms) Files, Job 80–B01285A, DCI (Helms) Chrono., Aug.–Dec. 1967, 01 Aug–31 Dec 1967. Secret; No Foreign Dissem. Drafted by P. Walsh with the concurrence of R.J. Smith, Deputy Director for Intelligence. Helms sent the paper to Rostow on August 30 with a covering note that reads: "This is the additional paper you requested last evening. Since it was entirely your initiative, I leave entirely to you whether or not you pass this on to the President."

Hanoi–Haiphong network, with the exception of the Hanoi plant itself, have been out of service since early June.

4. The country's only cement plant and its only metallurgical plant have ceased production because of bomb damage and the loss of electric power supply. One of the two major textile plants has been heavily damaged; production in the small fertilizer and chemical industry has been curtailed and paper production has been reduced by 80 percent. Thus, many achievements of a decade of industrial growth have been neutralized and, in some cases, lost.

5. During recent weeks the main thrust of the air attack has been against key bridges and LOC's in the Hanoi area. The vital rail lines to China and Haiphong were particularly hard hit. Attacks on the Doumer Bridge and the rail bypass over the Canal des Rapides have effectively limited through rail traffic from China to a rail ferry bypass around the Doumer Bridge. This bypass has been seeded with magnetic influence bombs. The combination of these measures has resulted in the most serious disruption to the rail system since the start of the bombing. Although essential military and economic traffic continues to move, this effort is taxing the system heavily and is done with far more difficulty and cost than previously.

6. Much of the resupply burden is being handled at the port of Haiphong where port congestion has increased significantly. The time required to unload ships has doubled in the past few months. These delays result from the sharp increase in imports since March, reflecting in large part the material requirements imposed by the air attack and the use of the Haiphong sanctuary area for mass storage of supplies.

7. Reports from Hanoi indicate that the evacuation program is now being enforced more rigidly. A recent order reportedly now in effect repeats earlier directives calling for the removal of children and non-essential personnel as well as the personnel of all small industries and handicraft cooperatives, merchants, and their families. More significantly, the new order also calls for some large state enterprises and ministries to begin evacuation. Thus, there is now a much greater emphasis on evacuation of essential as well as non-essential activities from the Hanoi area, with all its attendant negative effects on productivity and public morale.

8. Despite the increasing hardships, economic losses and mounting problems in management and logistics caused by the air war, Hanoi continues to meet its own needs and to support its aggression in South Vietnam. Essential military and economic traffic continues to move.

Richard Helms²

² Printed from a copy that indicates Helms signed the original.

299. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, August 30, 1967, 1147Z.

4452. For the President from Bunker. Herewith my eighteenth weekly telegram:

A. General.

1. The campaign got up a full head of steam (or hot air) this past week.

[Here follows discussion of campaign atmospherics.]

B. Political.

19. In April of 1966 the military reluctantly agreed to hold elections for a Constituent Assembly. Acting under what appeared to be the imminent threat of a massive Buddhist upheaval, they thus set in motion a long chain of political events which comes to a new climax four days from now. It has been an instructive experience for all concerned, as well as a most hopeful beginning for a new political era in this country, and I think the record is worth scanning as we near election eve.

20. In April of 1966 the Vietnamese Government was an almost pure military junta with very little civilian participation or support. It was vulnerable to Communist charges of being illegal and not representative of the Vietnamese people. It was intolerant of dissent.

21. The decision to hold elections for a Constituent Assembly was in large measure forced on the military junta. Nevertheless I think that the military leadership must be credited with seeing, after the fact at least, the great value of that step. The immediate result was to deprive the Buddhist extremists of a meaningful political issue. In the long run, however, that decision turned out to be the start of an increasingly effective political offensive against the Communists. It is a truism that military means alone cannot win this war. The move toward democratic institutions has proved to be an effective political complement to our military offensive, and I think the military leaders have grasped that fact.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Immediate; Nodis. Received at 11:58 a.m. and passed to the White House. In a covering note to the copy of the telegram sent to the President, August 31, Rostow wrote: "Herewith Ambassador Bunker looks backward and forward at the Vietnamese political process as we come down to the wire on the election." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 8B(1) [A], Bunker's Weekly Report to the President) This telegram is printed in full in Pike, *The Bunker Papers*, pp. 138–146.

22. One reason for the effectiveness of the political offensive is that it has tended to change the nature of the political opposition. In the past about the only means for changing the government, or even effectively influencing its policies, were essentially violent. Demonstrations and coups were the natural thoughts of most “out” politicians. Those who became desperate turned to the Viet Cong, the ultimate source of violence in this country.

23. With the move toward constitutional government, it became possible to express opposition in non-violent ways. Political opposition was channeled into legal and constructive efforts: first, to win election to the Constituent Assembly, then to influence the writing of the Constitution and the electoral laws, now to compete in the current national elections.²

24. While it must be admitted that political stability here is by no means achieved and the past months have been a perilous journey, I believe that channeling the political opposition into legal and non-violent avenues has contributed heavily to the degree of stability which has existed. It has also begun a move toward more real and permanent political stability. This move now has some momentum behind it, and we have the hope that it will continue to gain momentum.

25. Another reason for the effectiveness of the political offensive against the Viet Cong is the educational effect it has on all Vietnamese, civilian as well as military. The hammering out of the Constitution was accompanied by many clashes of opinion and interest. At several points it seemed that the work of the Assembly might never be completed. Even after the Constitution was finished, the military leadership appeared to be so opposed to some features of the document that we feared they might radically amend it or even reject it out of hand. Good sense and political compromises prevailed, however. In the process, the military learned that they could, indeed must, work with the civilians. The civilian politicians, for their part, had a lesson in dealing with the military that will stand them in good stead in the future. I think that both military and civilian leaders now realize that it is possible to work together toward shared objectives while still disagreeing about many other things.

26. There were hazards, grave hazards, passed by the past year. One of these was the threat to military unity which the very process of democratization itself seemed to inspire. The merger of the Thieu-Ky Presidential slates has not entirely removed that threat, but it did

² As reported in INR Intelligence Note 720, September 6, on September 1 the NLF announced a pledge to hold free elections and create a democratically-oriented Constitution as a means of establishing a “national union democratic government.” (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S)

demonstrate that the Vietnamese military are fully aware of the danger and will act to avoid it.

27. Another threat was the deliberate effort to exploit regional differences in last fall's Cabinet crisis. I think it a sign of increased political maturity that regionalism has been muted and denied in the election campaign. All of the candidates are bidding for all the electorate, and none of them has made an effort to exploit purely regional prejudice.

28. The campaign itself has been perhaps the single greatest experience for the Vietnamese politicians and their people. An unprecedented freedom of expression, including a completely uncensored press, has shown all Vietnamese that even here and under wartime conditions it is possible to tolerate a great measure of dissent, a fact which has not in the past been much appreciated by Vietnamese leaders.

29. I have the impression that the campaign has also tended to instill a new respect for the limits of responsible criticism, indeed perhaps even a new respect for fact. In a society which has long been known for its addiction to wild rumors and extreme suspicion, this is important for future stability.

30. All of this is progress, but we are by no means home. If, as seems most likely, Thieu–Ky win the election, there is a possibility that certain of the defeated candidates may band together in an effort to invalidate or at least discredit the election. I am not persuaded that the civilian politicians—to say nothing of the military—yet have a full understanding of the role of a loyal opposition. Both the Viet Cong and the extremist Buddhists will be doing all they can to encourage the defeated candidates to adopt measures and postures which will make it hard for the elected leaders to form a broadly based government and an effective military-civilian partnership.

31. There is also the continuing problem of the relationship between Thieu and Ky. I think this is by no means fully sorted out, and we may be in for some difficult moments while they establish their future roles. I am essentially optimistic, however, that they have both realized the necessity to work together, no matter how painful it may be.

[Here follows discussion of additional political, economic, and military issues.]

Bunker

300. Memorandum From William J. Jorden of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) and the White House Press Spokesman (Christian)¹

Washington, August 31, 1967.

SUBJECT

Information Teams on Viet-Nam

This memo summarizes our discussion of yesterday.²

PARTICIPANTS

George Christian
Walt Rostow
General Taylor
William Jorden
Harold Kaplan
Robert Miller
Tom Johnson (for part of discussion)

The meeting was based on General Taylor's memo of August 25 to the President.³

Point 1 of the memo—better coordination among allied nations of information policy—is being handled. A 7-nation group has been formed and is now meeting regularly.

Main focus of the meeting was on Point 2 of the Taylor memo—organizing a team or teams to travel around the country to explain the Viet-Nam situation and our policy there.

There was general agreement that one or more civilian/military teams should be organized immediately. They would hold off-the-record meetings with newspaper editorial boards, key editors, TV and radio executives concerned with news and editorials. The team(s) could also be used for briefing influential individuals—governors, Congressmen, presidential candidates, etc.

There was discussion of forming three teams—each one to cover one part of the country, Northeast, Midwest, and West Coast.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Misc. Memos, Vol. 3B. Confidential.

² Rostow also reported on the results of the meeting in a separate memorandum to the President, September 2. (Ibid., Vol. 3A)

³ In his August 25 memorandum to the President, General Taylor cited the need to defend more resolutely the administration's policy in Vietnam. As a result of his recent trip to Asia, Taylor found that while allied leaders believed in the need to support South Vietnam, they faulted the administration for "failing to get the message across" in terms of world public opinion. Taylor proposed the establishment of a comprehensive information campaign. (Ibid., Taylor Report of Overseas Operations and Misc. Memos)

Care should be taken to mesh this activity with other similar efforts—e.g. Secretary Rusk's meeting with the Editorial Board of the Baltimore *Sun*.

It was agreed that the new Kaplan shop operating under Rostow and Jorden would be responsible for supplying the teams with the necessary facts and up-to-date material.

General Taylor stressed the importance of having the teams:

- (1) go out as Presidential representatives, with at least one team member being a well-known figure;
- (2) making sure that the teams are supplied with cogent answers to all the questions being widely asked by the American people.

Names mentioned as possible members of the team(s) were:

Ambassador Lodge, Clark Clifford, General Taylor, Phil Habib, Generals DePuy, Walt, Krulak, and Kinnard; also, Roy Wehrle on the economic side.

Mr. Rostow suggested the following main themes:

- (1) the war is being won; no "stalemate;"
- (2) the war can only be lost in the U.S; Hanoi cannot win in the field; it counts only on the prospect of weakening and withdrawal by the U.S;
- (3) the meaning of Viet-Nam to Asia; economic developments in countries on the rim of China; development of regional cooperation; progress based on confidence in the U.S. commitment to Southeast Asia;
- (4) the consequences—to Asia and the world—of an American pull-out or retreat to "enclaves;"
- (5) the relationship between Viet-Nam and the turmoil inside China.

Added to the above were:

- (1) The reasons we are in Viet-Nam.
- (2) Bombing—reasons for and results from.
- (3) The status of ARVN—how good are the Vietnamese troops, progress in the past year.

There was discussion whether as part of their job—or as "cover"—the panels should undertake public appearances, especially on TV, as part of their field activities. The consensus was in favor of keeping to off-the-record sessions.

Mr. Christian said his office could prepare schedules and write letters asking that meetings be arranged with editors, and others.

There was a brief discussion of trying to get a TV network interested in a regular (biweekly or monthly) TV show that would be a report from the Government on Viet-Nam. High level officials would present material and answer questions on matters then attracting interest among the general public or press.

301. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam¹

Washington, August 31, 1967, 0159Z.

30023. For Ambassador Bunker from the Under Secretary. Subject: Use of US Leverage in Viet-Nam After Elections.

1. We have been giving thought on high-level, inter-agency basis to ways we might more effectively exercise leverage on newly elected GVN to maximize latter's performance in post-election period. Following discussion contains our thoughts for application by the Mission under your direction and as you see fit. Since exercise of leverage is a most complex and delicate matter, its application is of course left to your discretion. We would welcome your comments on the paper.

2. We are sending by separate message a draft working paper suggesting a priority program for the new GVN, including specific suggestions for impact measures to be accomplished within three months.² Subject to your comments, our thoughts on leverage are of course closely related to our thinking regarding a priority program.

3. In anticipating the US/GVN relationship in the post-election period, it is generally agreed that the US should find ways to exercise leverage with the Vietnamese Government which are more commensurate in degree with the importance of the US effort to South Viet-Nam's survival and which reflect the climate of growing restiveness in the US regarding our commitment in Viet-Nam. One of the chief reasons why US leverage has been applied ineffectively in the past is that, in its impatience to get results and make progress, the US has increasingly resorted to unilateral programs and actions with inadequate con-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 15 VIET S. Secret; Priority; Exdis. Drafted by Miller; cleared by Leonhart, Habib, Bundy, and representatives of USIA, AID, and DOD; and approved by Katzenbach. Repeated to CINCPAC for POLAD.

² This paper, entitled "Post-Election Priorities in Viet-Nam" and sent to Bunker in telegram 30020 to Saigon, August 31, set up priorities for newly-elected Vietnamese leaders. In addition, an "Impact Program" of immediate measures was devised. The initial priority was to broaden the GVN by incorporating civilians into the government and establishing a relationship with the political parties extant in South Vietnam. "Impact" measures would include diverse appointments to the new government and a new political party law. The next priority was improvement of the ARVN, with "impact" reforms including merit promotion and the formation of an inspectorate. The third priority, corruption in the government, was to be reduced by a new government agency created to root out officials engaged in corrupt practices. A fourth priority was to revitalize national reconciliation and Chieu Hoi programs by extending political participation and civil rights. Renewed peace initiatives comprised the fifth priority. The sixth priority was implementation of economic stabilization measures, the immediate measure being the selection by the new President of an economic development commission. The last priority was to devise an efficient means to mobilize manpower resources. (Ibid.)

sultation with the Vietnamese. On the other hand, the indiscriminate and careless exercise of US leverage could undermine the self-respect of the Vietnamese Government in its own eyes and in the eyes of the South Vietnamese people.

4. To be effective, US leverage must be exercised in the context of a relationship of mutual respect and confidence, and in ways commensurate with the objective sought. It must also be backed by credible sanctions.

5. The various tools of leverage available to us are described below. It is not proposed that all of these tools be used at any given time or that some of them be used at all. However, they represent a selection of arrows that might be placed in the US Mission quiver for use as the Mission Council deems appropriate. It will be particularly important to construct a credible and effective system of US leverage for use as necessary and appropriate in connection with the list of priority program objectives which we shall be seeking to achieve with the newly elected government in the immediate post-election period.

Tools of Leverage

6. A wide range of possible techniques and forms of influence is available at each level of the American presence in Viet-Nam. A few of these leverage devices are now in use, mostly at the initiative of individual Americans on the spot, but not as part of an organized framework of influence. Other devices have been instituted in the past, only to be subsequently abandoned because of fear of their misuse, actual misuse, or inadequate understanding of their value.

7. In the following list we array a range of possible instruments of influence that the US might employ, with some indication of their applicability:

a. *Rapport*: influence based on personal relationships. Given Vietnamese stress on personal relationships in official life, this can be an invaluable helpmate to the exercise of influence. It is also, however, the least reliable and least transferable form of influence.

b. *Joint Planning and Evaluation*: establishing a formal, close staff working relationship between US and GVN plans and evaluation elements. Their task is to agree on joint program goals and benchmarks, with provisions for periodic progress evaluation. An example of this relationship was provided by MACV's RD Support Directorate, a group of US live-in advisors operating within the GVN Ministry of Revolutionary Development during its formative period.

c. *Joint Inspection and Audit*: creating joint US/GVN inspection teams to conduct on-site examination of program progress and resource utilization. This approach has been employed in inspecting the effec-

tiveness of ARVN battalions committed to RD and in obtaining quarterly reports on execution of the RD program.

d. *Joint Secretariats*: composed of US and GVN specialists, to assist the latter in policy development on issues of mutual interest. Such an arrangement is in fact under consideration by the Joint Mission/GVN Economic Committee, a high-level policy group that meets periodically to discuss key economic issues of concern to both sides, and that appoints sub-committees to cope with specific problems. A joint secretariat would formalize this arrangement on a continuing basis, with second-level Mission and GVN officials furnishing combined staffs to examine policy alternatives, resolve differences, make disagreements explicit, and, where possible, submit agreed-upon recommendations to their principals.

e. *The JCRR Approach*: establishing a joint, autonomous, dually-staffed, foundation-like organization headed by a board of commissioners appointed by the two heads of state, to administer all forms of nonmilitary aid. The model for this is the highly successful Sino-American Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction set up in Taiwan in 1949. As an independently financed institution, it is removed from the direct pressures of domestic politics, can mobilize the energies of the private sector, and respond quickly to articulated needs.

f. *Contingency Funds and Special Resources*: to be placed at the disposal of US advisors to enable local officials to exploit critical local opportunities when GVN machinery is unable to respond promptly. This device affords flexibility in program execution by providing prompt reward for productive effort and resources for error-correction. More important, it provides the advisor with powerful leverage in his relation with his counterpart.

g. *Control Over Expenditure of Counterpart Piasters*: to gain influence over RD program execution. Inherent in the existence of counterpart funds is the right of joint US/GVN agreement on their disposition. Present practice is to yield up counterpart at the GVN national budget level with no further US control over appropriation or expenditure of these funds, other than that provided by joint US/GVN project agreements. To reintroduce an element of US control over expenditure of these funds would require reinstituting a joint sign-off procedure at province level, needing the signatures of both US province senior advisor and GVN province chief to authorize any piaster expenditure or commodity release.

h. *Retention of Resources in US Channels*: so that disbursement to the GVN can be made at the point of utilization. The extreme form of this would involve distribution within Viet-Nam of all US material support, both military equipment and civilian commodities, through a US-managed logistical system. Such a system would be relatively easy to

institute in the RD program and has already been partially applied to MAP. However, channelling all assistance through a US logistical system would severely burden that system, would make it geographically more inflexible, and would perpetuate Vietnamese dependence upon it, rather than creating self-supporting capabilities of their own. A more feasible approach would be to retain only part, e.g., the RD resources, in U.S. channels.

i. *Joint Personnel Management*: to institute career incentive, selection, and removal policies. U.S. influence over sensitive GVN personnel policy could be exerted in several modest ways, such as monitoring the operation of the Vietnamese system through a parallel U.S. staff, or maintaining a separate U.S. or joint efficiency-reporting system (keeping track of promising Vietnamese for specific leadership roles and identifying incompetent Vietnamese for selection-out). Some of this is done now but the system affords no way of affecting GVN decisions. To accomplish the latter would require more formal joint arrangements such as a joint board to review recommendations for personnel actions—an arrangement that would also provide a forum for airing honest disagreements. The system could be made more palatable by requiring reciprocal rating by Vietnamese and Americans. Alternatively or in addition, the U.S. might follow the practice of submitting to the GVN periodic assignment and removal recommendations relying on other parts of the over-all influence system for leverage to gain acceptance. Another possibility would be the establishment of a Civil Service Commission with a U.S. advisory staff to work closely with it.

j. *Joint Command*: to achieve greater integration of GVN, US, and possibly other Free World decision elements, civil and/or military. For a variety of political reasons, integration at the higher levels has been rejected by the Vietnamese and judged undesirable by the U.S. Command. At lower levels, such as field force and division, there is considerable reluctance to integrate command, because of the recognition of VC intelligence penetration of RVNAF. At battalion level, unit association (the “buddy system”) is being attempted in lieu of joint command. At company level, the introduction of an American command element into Vietnamese units, as pioneered by the Marine Combined Action Platoons, is now being expanded to RF/PF companies. Under the conditions of Viet-Nam, joint command at higher levels does not appear to be a promising leverage technique. At lower levels, reinforcing the advisor’s hand may be more effective than placing him in command of a Vietnamese unit.

k. *Policy-Level Monitoring System*: to monitor the exercise of authority of key officials of the GVN. This would be an arrangement whereby each member of the Mission Council and other senior Mission officers as appropriate would be designated by the Ambassador to monitor the actions of specific key GVN officials.

1. *Withholding U.S. Support*: At levels below Saigon, the authority of U.S. senior advisors to cut off or withdraw U.S. civil and military support from Vietnamese activities or operations within their area of responsibility would constitute powerful leverage. To achieve a posture of graduated response, the advisor could have available to him such varied instruments as the right to grant or withhold access to air transportation for the province chief, U.S. firepower, mobility, and medical evacuation for particular RVNAF units, and over-all military and civil support for an entire province or program, including withdrawal of an entire U.S. advisory team.

At the Saigon level, a range of extremely tough options is available, encompassing selective withdrawal of U.S. support for Viet-Nam. Persuading the GVN that these are in fact available, requires the will to use them and the political ability to follow through if our hand is called. Options would include halting further troop deployments, standing down U.S. unit operations, suspending CIP and MAP assistance, and so forth.

Rusk

302. Memorandum From the Ambassador's Special Assistant
(Lansdale) to the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker)¹

Saigon, September 2, 1967.

SUBJECT

Talk with Thieu, September 2

As you know, Chief of State Nguyen van Thieu asked me to "come right over" to Independence Palace, the morning of September 2. I did so and had an hour-long talk with him privately. He had no urgent problems to discuss. I had the feeling that he was looking for a little reassurance, on the eve of the election. We talked mostly about the future of Viet Nam.

I did, however, alert him to the dangers of mishandling the detention of Colonel Pham van Lieu, with so huge a contingent of journalists in town seeking a news story, and suggested that Lieu be detained personally by someone such as General Vien or General Vy

¹ Source: Center for Military History, DepCORDS/MACV Files, Lansdale (1967–1968). Secret. Copies were sent to Locke, Westmoreland, Komer, Calhoun, Hart, and Jacobson.

rather than at MSS headquarters, where journalists could speculate that he was being mistreated. Thieu said he knew very little about the case, other than charges that Lieu had been handing out leaflets supporting Presidential candidate Phan khac Suu at the NCO Academy in Nha Trang, which Lieu commands; the thought was to hold Lieu for five days in Saigon, away from his command, until the elections are over, as a "military disciplinary measure." I commented that it could become a sensational incident and urged Thieu to act. He then spoke to his staff, presumably about the handling of Lieu.

Also, Thieu said that his brother Kieu had talked to him about candidates issuing a joint statement to the people on Election Eve. Thieu felt that such evidence of patriotic unity would be a good thing, but that the other candidates would suspect that Thieu had some trick up his sleeve and would refuse to sign it. Thus, Thieu was issuing his own statement today (presumably by radio) which would stress the need for honesty in the election, and would urge people to vote. I said that it would be wise in this statement to request specifically those in positions of power—Corps Commanders and Province and District Chiefs—to do their best to insure free and fair elections. Thieu nodded seemingly in agreement.

Here are highlights of other matters discussed:

—The militant Buddhists of the An Quang Pagoda seemed to Thieu to be the major source of dissension in the immediate post-election period. I suggested that Thieu might use his brother Kieu and others to turn the energies and scheming wits of the An Quang leaders into more constructive channels, such as into social welfare projects; the GVN could help, as feasible; the An Quang leaders would be attracted by this as a means of building up their organization, and it would be wise for the GVN to introduce some more moderate elements into such an enterprise, influencing while cooperating. Thieu said that this was worth considering further, because the only moves he had thought of so far were to either jail them or let them become an open opposition.

—Thieu described his concept of pacification, frankly admitting that he was thinking of how Ngo dinh Nhu had run it under President Diem. Thieu felt that it should be his own priority business, if he is elected President, with a Deputy to run the nuts-and-bolts daily business, probably as Vice Prime Minister. He sketched out a "chain of command" from the President directly to Province Chiefs, but with Corps Commanders holding regional responsibility. I commented that this seemed to be a fuzzy "chain of command" and that I had grave doubts about the ability of Corps Commanders to understand the role of the people in "people's warfare," which is a fundamental need in pacification. I pointed out that Nhu had become lost in theories, by not being in touch with the people—and the tragedy of this held a lesson for

Thieu that was worth heeding. Thieu agreed that it was easy to be fooled by Province Chiefs, since some are not only able administrators but able liars as well. Thieu then said that he was thinking of having an Operations Room in the Palace. We talked about maps, types of data, communications, the Malayan Red Book experience, and similar details for a time.

—Thieu said that he wanted General Nguyen duc Thang to take over responsibility for RF and PF forces, as one of the major elements in pacification. We discussed Thang at some length. I stressed how a President and Commander-in-Chief could best deal with a strong leader such as Thang, for the good of the country. I described how support would have to be given and mutual respect and trust earned. I gave him my personal evaluation of Thang as a developing leader who could make a Thieu Administration succeed in this decisive moment of Viet Nam's history, if Thieu acted with the wise leadership he himself would be in position to exert.

—This led into a discussion of his relations with Nguyen cao Ky. I commented that Thieu should be ready to discover that he himself had suddenly become a different man on the morning of September 4, if elected President. In the past, he had been too reserved, awaiting the moves of others. In the future, Thieu would have to take the first step towards working closely with others, such as Ky; if not, he would find himself increasingly surrounded by sycophantic "yes men" and schemers. We then talked for a time about how Thieu could develop better personal relations with Ky and others, to gain real teamwork in the future. I also suggested some ways he could become closer to the people, when he travelled in the countryside.

—We then talked about the evolution of political parties, including the part played in this process by both the Senate and the Lower House. I stressed the attitude the new President would have to take, to encourage the emergence into public life of the present clandestine concept of political organizations in Viet Nam, and the growth of various groups into more unified national parties that had structures in villages and precincts.

—I asked about the composition of his Administration, if he becomes President. Thieu laughed and said, "go ahead and give me a lecture about a 'broadly based Government'." He explained that "this is what Americans talk to me about." I commented that they probably were thinking about some of the hard bumps and crises ahead. Thieu replied that he was thinking of them also. Then, Thieu's aide came in and reminded Thieu that he was running far behind schedule. Thieu asked to be excused, shook hands with me rather emotionally (taking my hand in both of his tightly), and thanked me for the talk. I left, noting that there were people awaiting him in the anteroom and in the corridor.

303. Editorial Note

In general elections held on September 3, 1967, the South Vietnamese people elected Nguyen Van Thieu as President and Nguyen Cao Ky as Vice President. The vote for the Thieu–Ky ticket was 1,638,902, or 34.8 percent of the total cast. Opposition tickets headed by Truong Dinh Dzu, Phan Khac Suu, and Tran Van Huong received, respectively, 17.2 percent, 10.8 percent, and 10 percent of the total vote cast. An analysis contained in Ambassador Bunker's weekly telegram to President Johnson noted that a large portion of the vote for the Thieu–Ky ticket came from areas outside the large urban centers, while the other candidates led in the major cities, as evidenced by the fact that Suu received the most votes in cities such as Hue and Danang and Huong received more votes than Thieu in Saigon. The members of the Senate were chosen at this time, while elections for the House of Representatives were to be held on October 22. "The Presidential election results speak for themselves and will go far to answer the earlier charges that the government was guilty of improper activities during the campaign and would manipulate the results," Bunker suggested. Bunker's full analysis of the election is in his 19th weekly report to the President, telegram 5060 from Saigon, September 6. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S; printed in full in Pike, *The Bunker Papers*, pages 147–159)

The President had sent a mission to Vietnam to observe the elections first-hand. The observer group numbered two dozen individuals, including Governors, Senators, labor and business leaders, and journalists. A full list of the group's members is in telegram 26112 to Saigon, August 24. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S) According to Johnson's Daily Diary, he met with the election observers on September 6 from 11:06 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. (Johnson Library) Jim Jones' notes of this meeting are *ibid.*, Meeting Notes File, Sept. 6, '67–Mtg. With VN Election Observers. No other record has been found. Walt Rostow cabled the group's positive assessment to Bunker in telegram CAP 67759, September 7. (*Ibid.*, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, White House Cables–Back Channels–Incoming, Outgoing)

On September 8 the President wrote to Thieu:

"I extend my warm regards to you and to Prime Minister Ky on your victory in the election of a President and Vice President. I have just received a detailed and most moving account of your election from the distinguished Americans whom you invited to Viet-Nam as observers. They returned believing in the fairness of the procedures and observed the intense interest of the Vietnamese people in this major step toward creating your own popularly chosen and constitutionally

based government. Their individual reports were a testimonial to the courage and determination of the Vietnamese people to remain free and to create their own political institutions in their own way. The election was a milestone along the path toward the goal you have set for yourselves—a free, secure and peaceful Viet-Nam. But it is not the end of the journey. Many hard tasks remain. Not the least of these now is the creation of a strong, effective and broadly based government that will help you and your country achieve the objectives you set forth in your campaign. The American government and I, personally, look forward to continued close cooperation with you and your colleagues in the days and months ahead. I am confident that our efforts—joined with those of our allies—will be crowned with success and that under your leadership, a peaceful, democratic, strong and prosperous Viet-Nam will emerge.”

This letter was sent to Saigon in telegram 34017, September 8. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 15–1 VIET S) Thieu, who received the letter on September 9 from Bunker, acknowledged the President’s communication in his own letter of thanks dated September 26 but received from the Vietnamese Embassy by the Department of State on October 10 and then forwarded to the White House. (Ibid.)

304. Memorandum From William J. Jorden of the National Security Council Staff to the President’s Special Assistant (Rostow)¹

Washington, September 5, 1967.

SUBJECT

Priorities in Viet-Nam Under a New Government

Thieu and Ky are in. What should they now do? What should we push?

The *first* order of business should be formation of a *new government*.

It should be broadly based. Strenuous efforts should be made to pull in some leading candidates or those close to them. Huong should

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Misc. Memos, Vol. 3B. Secret.

be pressed. Also Dr. Dan (Suu's VP candidate). Also Dr. Vien, present Deputy PM and close to Huong.²

Second priority—establishing close and good relations with the new Assembly. In the long run, this can only be done if the Government begins organizing a *political party* and enlisting significant legislators.

Third—a matter of internal importance and significant impact here and abroad—an *approach to the VC and the Front*: Lay down your arms and stop the killing; join the nation; personal and political rights will be assured. A national reconciliation commission should be set up.

Fourth—an approach to Hanoi. This will have to follow up on Thieu's campaign promise. But it should be—or appear to be—more than a propaganda gimmick. They should be urged not to rush in without planning. My preference would be for a quiet diplomatic approach. Emphasis should be on talk "among us Vietnamese." An open offer of a one-week pause would be rejected out of hand by Hanoi. This is no time to play games. If Hanoi is willing to talk with the GVN, a bombing pause could enter into the talks. If it breaks this way (talks in Paris, Phnom Penh, or wherever), we should go to the Russians and urge them to put up or shut up, get Hanoi to consider a real response; we would agree to halt bombing first if Hanoi's need is for face-saving. The gut question: are they in a mood to cut down their involvement in the South?

There are distinct advantages in letting the new GVN take the lead in moving down a diplomatic track. And my judgment is that they are now in a mood as never before.

We should, meantime, be going forward with our own efforts—of which I judge the Oslo channel is the most promising.

The *worst* approach right now:

Go to the GVN with a huge shopping list of things to do, programs to push. This has been the pattern over the years; it doesn't work.

Let's hit them with a few high priority items first. We should also sort out *new* things they can do (appeal to the Front; approach to Hanoi; political party organization) and the *old* things we want to see move ahead (improvement of ARVN, anti-corruption campaign, RD, land reform, etc.).

On the *approach to Hanoi*, it may be that Thieu will feel obliged to do it soon and to do it publicly.

If so, we should urge him to wait long enough for some preplanning and preparations. *Before* any statement by Saigon, we should have a chance to hit U Thant, the Russians, the Indians, Poles, Indonesians,

² Tran Van Huong, Phan Quang Dan, and Nguyen Luu Vien.

etc. We should tell them that a serious gesture is coming up; it will involve a halt in bombing; now is the time for Hanoi to respond—with deeds as well as words.

Again, the message should be: put up or shut up.

Bill

305. Memorandum From the President's Assistant (Jones) to President Johnson¹

Washington, September 5, 1967, 1:05–2:40 p.m.

SUBJECT

Weekly meeting with Secretaries Rusk and McNamara, Walt Rostow, George Christian, Dick Helms and General Harold K. Johnson

The meeting opened with the discussion of the Vietnam elections observers. The President asked if Lodge could be contacted to see if he could stay an extra day or two to talk to the news media for backgrounders. He also hoped Senator Hickenlooper could talk to CBS. The President commented that he would be meeting with Labor leaders next week.

Rusk said he had talked to Tom Wicker concerning the factual errors in this morning's article in the *New York Times* on the Vietnam elections. Rusk said Wicker failed to recognize that about half the Vietnam population is under voting age. Rusk told Wicker there is no bar to voting as long as they were registered. It was agreed that Bill Bundy would write a corrective letter promptly to the *New York Times*.

McNamara pointed out that fourteen targets have been authorized but have been delayed because of bad weather. Also four are inside the 10 mile circle and are being held. These total 18. Of the 51 remaining, 9 have been removed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff after careful examination. Some of them have been removed because they have not been repaired such as bridges, etc., and others which were authorized or linked to targets which have been authorized.

McNamara and Rusk agreed that of the 42 remaining, they are ready to recommend 10. Of these, two are being held out for further

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Meeting Notes File, Folder #4, 1/67–11/67. No classification marking. The notation "L" on the memorandum indicates that the President saw it.

technical examination. One requires further photography and the other requires fresh intelligence.²

General Johnson said the weather will be bad for the next few days because of high winds and tropical storms, etc.

McNamara pointed out these 8–10 targets which have been authorized would be an adequate bank for the week.

McNamara said that of the 32 remaining, 3 were ports, 4 were air fields.

The President interrupted to ask if Gia Lam was one of them. McNamara responded that Gia Lam was a commercial air field and was not one of the 4 air fields he referred to. He added that there are 5 or 6 small petroleum storage sites in Hanoi. That these were small ones of 430 metric tons out of 72,000.

Rusk asked on something like that (the small storage sites which are insignificant) whether we should ask a man to get killed. McNamara replied "that's why I don't recommend it."

General Johnson said he did not agree. "Men dying is a relative thing. The effect of the air campaign is a cumulative one and no one can predict which blow will be the crucial blow to them (North Vietnamese)."

The President interjected "if we're not damaging targets why . . ."

General Johnson replied that this was all relative. "Every blow makes him stretch his resources and at some point his resources will not be able to be stretched anymore."

Rusk changed the subject briefly to ask if we are really having our air power saturate every enemy position, especially fortified positions, with napalm before the Marines go in. He asked if we are giving the men in the South all the air power that they can absorb.

General Johnson said he could not answer that categorically. CINCPAC informed him that the men got all the air cover they could use.

Rusk replied, "CINCPAC has a different war than Westmoreland's."

McNamara said there is enough air power to call in on a particular case. He said only 25% of the air strikes in South Vietnam support the ground troops.

² In a telephone call to Rostow on August 31, the President said: "Whatever real bombing we are going to do will be done between now and September 11. Get Dean Rusk to look over those 49 left and give me order in which they should be hit. Then we will go back and re-hit those bridges, power plant, etc." (Note on telephone call from the President, August 31; *ibid.*, National Security File, Files of Walt Rostow, Bombing)

Rusk commented he was just worried about the battalion commander going against a fortified position without air power softening up the enemy.

The President asked McNamara to look into this and get an answer and do all that is necessary to minimize fortified ground positions against the U.S. ground forces.

McNamara returned to the remaining targets saying there were four air fields, three ports and five or six POL sites, and 19 others which include seven small targets such as small battery plants, concrete plants, and tire factories. There are three or four important bridges and railroad yards in Haiphong and Hanoi, and five or six small depot areas.

The President asked if these bridges are important.

McNamara said the bridges are important but they are “smack in the middle of Haiphong and Hanoi, and the railroad yards are too.” McNamara said at some point we may have to work on them. This will be based on their defenses not being as heavy or the civilian casualties not being heavy if those targets were hit.

McNamara pointed out that of the three ports he mentioned, Cam Pha today has no foreign vessels in it. But a foreign vessel could go in there any time. The second port, Hong Gai, has a Russian ship in it today, but it is expected to leave tomorrow.

The President asked why we could not give a conditional order that as long as there are no ships left in either of those two harbors—they could get hit.

McNamara said he did not know if this was feasible.

The President said to put our best man in there to see if there are any ships, and if not, hit the ports.

General Johnson said “Theater commanders would welcome this kind of latitude.”

The President said we could hit these ports if there were no ships in them.

Rusk interjected that the order should read “no ships.” The order should not be conditioned upon whether they are “Russian ships” or on the registry of the ships.

McNamara told General Johnson to issue the orders and make it crystal clear “if there are no ships in the port then they can be hit” and leave it to the commander to figure out how to be certain that there are no ships.

General Johnson said he would draw up this order.

The President asked how many were in that category—two or three.

McNamara said two. The other port, Haiphong, always has Russian ships in there.

The President said we should get a speech worked up for Thieu and let him make it as quickly as possible. The President also asked for a report on his desk today about what was said as far as negotiations are concerned.

Rusk said he thought Thieu made the peace negotiations conditional on reciprocity.

Walt Rostow said he is assembling the information on what was said on negotiations and will have that for the President today.

The President said Thieu should be grabbing the headlines from Dzu by proposing several programs.³

Helms interrupted to say the 100-Day program "is set to go and could be implemented immediately."

Walt Rostow said he received a cable today with Bunker's recommendation of the main items that they will press on the government of Vietnam. Walt Rostow asked to discuss one important issue at this meeting, which is "shall the government of Vietnam make an offer to the Viet Cong that if the Viet Cong accept the constitution then they can join political life in South Vietnam as a political party." Rostow pointed out that the constitution forbids the advocacy of communism. However if Thieu could make a statement that so long as the Communists do not try to force an overthrow of the constitution, then they could come in to political life as a political party—this would be a helpful statement.

The President said he wants to give a generous interpretation of this and be as liberal as possible.

[Here follows discussion unrelated to Vietnam.]

Rusk interjected that we should be very liberal in what we agreed to, so long as Vietnam is ready to buy this. However, Rusk emphasized that he was reluctant to impose this on the Vietnamese if they didn't buy it.

The President said to tell Bunker that we favor a liberal interpretation if he can get them (the government of Vietnam) to go along.

³ In a September 3 memorandum to the President, Bromley Smith wrote: "The most striking development in the election trends so far has been the unexpectedly strong showing of Truong Dinh Dzu, who had been predicted to outpoll the minor civilian candidates but to trail Thieu, Huong, Suu and Ha Thuc Ky. As the campaign progressed there were indications of strong public interest in Dzu's effective platform manner at joint rallies and his hard-hitting attacks on the government. Dzu proved a popular campaigner. The need for peace was a major theme of his campaign and he went farther than any other candidate in advocating early negotiations with the Communists. There are grounds for his questioning the sources of his campaign's material support and backing. The possibility of some Viet Cong or even French financial support is not excluded, although evidence is lacking." (Ibid., Country File, Vietnam, Memos to the President, Vol. 3)

Rusk said a variation is to declare a complete cease fire and amnesty in the IV Corps area.

The President said he hopes they (Thieu and Ky) show action even though all the election returns are not in yet and even though they have not been inaugurated. The President said "instead of Dzu taking the headlines, Thieu and Ky should fill the news with 'Operation Take-off'." "One day they should give out a statement on proposed land reforms, another to reform the army, another on anti-corruption" the President said.

Rusk and McNamara agreed to this.

McNamara advised that acceptance of the NLF is fundamental to any settlement and also fundamental to turning off Dzu.

Rostow added that by allowing the Communists to come in as a political party—this would do more to encourage the non-Communist factions to unite against the Communist party.

The President said to get a cable out to Bunker along these lines. "Get out the programs they can try to get proposed. Have Westmoreland talk to them about reforming the Army. Have them (Thieu and Ky) give backgrounders. First tell them how to broaden the government and make it as much civilian as possible. Clean up the government. Give out their programs on reconciliation in the Chieu Hoi program; land reform; peace initiatives. I'd have the *New York Times* believe that they will get what they want from this government," the President said.

The President said to let Ky talk about the things he wants done, especially those things that would appeal to the opposition in the U.S. He pointed out that we've got to minimize our opposition. The major threat we have is from the doves.

Rusk said *Time-Life* is having a debate on editorial policy on Vietnam and he plans to meet with them shortly.

[Here follows discussion unrelated to Vietnam.]

General Johnson reported that he had lunch with General Wheeler yesterday. Wheeler's doctors want to keep him in the hospital two weeks from the time he entered it and another two weeks for convalescing. Johnson confirmed that Wheeler did have a coronary attack and there was some damage to Wheeler's heart but all the tests indicate he is strong now.

After Helms and General Johnson left, George Christian asked if there weren't some of these 51 targets which have been hit.

McNamara replied yes.

[Here follows discussion of defense and security matters unrelated to Vietnam.]

McNamara said at some point it would be well if the President

could sit down for two hours of a relaxed conversation especially concerning the bombing program over the next year and year and a half.

It was decided to add Ambassador Eugene Locke to the schedule Wednesday, and George Christian asked if Locke could meet the press afterwards on a background basis.

The President again asked if Ambassador Lodge can stay around two or three days. The President also asked Rostow to talk to each 22 Vietnam Election Observers and to congratulate them on a good trip and a good job and to ask each of them to give their impressions to the news media.

Rostow asked if the President approved his idea to have Lodge form teams to go into various regions of the country.

The President said "I'm for it, but State Department or Defense should execute it."

Rusk recommended that the President tell the publishers (with whom he is having lunch Wednesday)⁴ that State and Defense will furnish the top military and political men from the departments to brief their editorial boards.

The meeting adjourned with the President asking Defense Department policies for sending Marines back to Vietnam for a second tour. McNamara replied that this was rarely done and McNamara personally goes over each second term enlistment in Vietnam.

The President asked if there would be any reason why he should not be away for the weekend perhaps Thursday through Sunday in Texas.

McNamara and Rusk said definitely no reason why he should not. [Here follows discussion of unrelated domestic matters.]

⁴ September 6.

Pennsylvania and Overtures to the Enemy, September–October

306. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam¹

Washington, September 6, 1967, 1756Z.

32591. For Ambassador from Secretary.

1. My separate cable² gives you one idea that we believe you should discuss urgently with Thieu at the first opportunity.

2. In general, highest authority hopes that new government will be as forthcoming in effort to bring NLF into constitutional political process as it can be without excessive US pressure and without threatening unity of government itself.

3. If you think it wise, we believe you should explore with Thieu and Ky as soon as possible the question of either covert approaches or some possible offer to the Viet Cong relating to their entering into political life in SVN under the constitution. If Communism is interpreted as a technique for seeking power and governing by dictatorial one-party rule, acceptance of the Vietnamese constitution and organized political activity within it by Communists could be regarded as compatible with Article 4.³

4. We are aware of possibilities that discreet channels may be about to open up for covert approach and these channels—if Thieu and Ky now know about them—would be one possibility. A public offer might have its own merits and could be undertaken separately from covert and private approaches.

5. Since any such approach or offer raises question of the right of the VC to form their own political party, we recognize that this is a bridge GVN has not yet been willing to cross, and it in particular may

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 15 VIET S. Secret; Immediate; Nodis. Drafted by Bundy and revised in White House, cleared by Thompson and Walt Rostow, and approved by Rusk.

² Not further identified.

³ Article 4 of the 1967 Constitution contained a statement of opposition to Communism in any form and prohibited any activity designed to publicize or carry out Communism. For text of the Constitution, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1967, pp. 897–909.

be more than is wise to put to them at the present time. However, we would like your judgment on question of putting this matter to them and including this feature. If you see no problem, you are authorized to go ahead as far as you like along these lines at your first contact.

6. As a variant or supplement to the above, one idea that has occurred to us here would be that of suggesting a local amnesty for the Viet Cong in selected areas, for example the IV Corps area. We recognize that this would involve more careful planning and an assessment of military factors, but would like your preliminary views.⁴

Rusk

⁴ In his reply, telegram 5646 from Saigon, September 11, Bunker cautioned against raising the issue of Viet Cong political participation during the current period of political maneuvering between the civilians and the military. "For us to inject such a prickly and politically explosive question prematurely into the midst of this delicate negotiating process would, in my opinion, be unwise and possibly counterproductive," he argued. Bunker also noted that the GVN would never consider organized Communist activity as permissible under Article 4. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 15 VIET S)

307. Instructions for Henry A. Kissinger¹

Washington, September 7, 1967.

Dr. Kissinger will fly to Paris from Boston late on September 8, arriving Paris Saturday morning, September 9.

Kissinger will first meet with Marcovich. He will caution M strongly against any disclosures of the contact by M or A, and note increasing US impatience at failure to receive any reply from Hanoi. He will contrast US restraint to date with numerous attacks sustained by US in the South. Arguments about US actions on August 21, 22, 23 will be countered, as previously, by noting the comprehensive nature of the US bombing cessation proposal.

Kissinger will advise M that if Bo wants to see him, HK is prepared to meet with Bo. Kissinger will indicate that a private meeting between him and Bo is preferable, but if M and/or A's presence ap-

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Pennsylvania (cont.). Top Secret; Nodis; Pennsylvania. A handwritten notation by Read, dated September 8, reads: "OK'd by Sec. Rusk & Sec. McNamara. Read and memorized by Kissinger."

pears unavoidable, this should not prevent HK's meeting with Bo. We would welcome obtaining HK's impressions of a conversation with Bo.

If a Kissinger/Bo meeting occurs, Kissinger will attempt to learn as much as he can from Bo about DRV reactions concerning the contacts to date. HK will note the total absence to date of any response, substantive or procedural, from Hanoi in this or any other channel.

If pressed about future US bombing in and around Hanoi, Kissinger will simply note that there has been no bombing in this area since August 24 and avoid giving any direct or indirect indication about future actions. HK will advise Bo where he can be reached at any time and note he will have to leave Paris "fairly soon" without implying any assurance or ultimatum in connection with a specific departure date.²

Mr. Kissinger will report promptly all developments through Embassy Paris cable facilities.³

² Rusk received a telephone call from McNamara the previous day, notes of which read: "M[cNamara] said he understand that Kissinger had called in this afternoon about the fact there was no answer. Seventy-two hours was involved and did not seem like an ultimatum. M suggests K be told this doesn't represent an ultimatum. M said any reasonable period was acceptable to us. Sec said there was the question of what happened on the 21st and 22nd. M said we wanted to clear the record as much as we could." (Notes of telephone call between McNamara and Rusk, September 6, 5:45 p.m.; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Rusk Files: Lot 72 D 192, Telcons, 1961–1969 and Presidential)

³ In telegram 34110 to Paris, September 8, Read requested that Kissinger be allowed to file messages "at any time of day or night" and that only the Ambassador and DCM know of his activity. (Ibid., Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA)

308. Memorandum From Director of Central Intelligence Helms to President Johnson¹

Washington, September 7, 1967.

SUBJECT

The Kissinger Project

The Exchanges with Hanoi

1. The approach to Hanoi through Kissinger's contacts in France was made in two phases. The proposal was first broached informally during a visit to Hanoi on 24 and 25 July by two French intermediaries, who carried a general message of US interest in negotiations.² The approach was intended to assure the North Vietnamese leaders of our willingness to stop bombing the North in return for some assurance that Communist forces in the South would not be reinforced. The North Vietnamese premier expressed interest and told the intermediaries that an unconditional end to the bombing would lead promptly to negotiations. He said Hanoi would prefer a public statement but would "settle for" a de facto cessation. The premier did not commit himself on the issue of resupply of Communist forces in the South.

2. In August a more precisely worded message was formulated in consultation with Washington and was presented by the same intermediaries to Hanoi's diplomatic representative in Paris.³ This second message, which was cabled by the North Vietnamese to Hanoi on 25 August, expressed US willingness to halt the bombing "with the understanding" that this would lead quickly to productive talks, either in secret or publicly announced. It also stated our "assumption" that Hanoi would not take advantage of the cessation of airstrikes. The message further suggested that if Hanoi wanted to preserve the secrecy of negotiations, it might prefer that bombing operations be reduced rather than ended abruptly. To lend authenticity to the message, it was accompanied by an assurance that the immediate Hanoi area would not be bombed for a period of ten days—24 August to 4 September.

¹ Source: Central Intelligence Agency, DCI (Helms) Files, Job 80-B01285A, DCI (Helms) Chrono Aug–Dec 1967, 01 Aug–31 Dec 1967. Top Secret; Eyes Only. In a covering note to Rostow, Helms wrote: "1. This is the evaluation of the Kissinger project which the President requested yesterday. Would you please forward it to him. 2. If there is any other type of analysis which you would like applied to this project, please let us know. Meanwhile, I was given to understand that the approach 'would be turned down' by the other side. Has this in fact happened?"

² See Document 263.

³ See Document 293.

3. When the bombing restriction expired on 4 September, no response had been received from Hanoi, either to the US message or to the request of the French intermediaries to return to North Vietnam for further discussion. Hanoi's Paris representative asked the intermediaries to contact him again on 6 September for further word. The bombing restriction meanwhile was extended through 7 September.

Analysis of Hanoi's Reaction

4. Hanoi may not have taken seriously the first approach through this channel in view of its "unofficial" character. The authenticity of the second message, however, can hardly have been mistaken. There are several possible reasons for the North Vietnamese delay in making a clear-cut response to the US proposal. Hanoi may well have concluded that the message signified no real movement in our position toward its requirement of an unconditional halt to the bombing. The reference to our "assumption" that Hanoi would not capitalize on the cessation to reinforce Communists in the South may have been misconstrued as a condition or as a demand for reciprocal action. Moreover, the suggestion that a limited de-escalation of the bombing would preserve secrecy more effectively than a sudden cessation could have been interpreted by Hanoi as a US "trick" to side-step the North Vietnamese demand for unconditional action.

5. Another reason for Hanoi's silence so far may relate to timing. The second message came shortly after an intensified bombing effort against Hanoi, was delivered during an unofficially declared lull in such strikes, and carried the implication of renewed attacks at the end of ten days. North Vietnamese leaders may have viewed this sequence as a not too subtle attempt by the US to apply the carrot-and-stick technique. In addition, much has been going on during this period, including the North Vietnamese national anniversary celebrations and the elections in South Vietnam. These distractions, added to the difficulties of making a collective decision on so controversial an issue as negotiations, could have made ten days look like a short time to the Hanoi leaders. It is worth noting that in the Tet bombing pause last February, Hanoi complained vigorously about the limited amount of time it was given to answer President Johnson's message. In any case, the setting of a deadline for acceptance would be likely to have a counterproductive psychological impact on an antagonist who is confident of his ability to outlast his adversary.

Conclusion

6. Hanoi's failure to date to respond to the US initiative could well be related to a combination of factors of timing and interpretation, reinforced by its deep-seated distrust of US motives in the area. The tone of the premier's remarks to the intermediaries in July suggests a greater

interest in getting talks started than we have noted in the past. This may represent merely a tactical shift, however, for we see nothing in his private statements or in his recent public pronouncements indicating a significant change in Hanoi's position. North Vietnamese leaders continue to insist on an unconditional stop to the bombing and a settlement based on their "four points." They show no sign yet of any readiness to compromise these objectives.

309. Memorandum From the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Wheeler) to the Chiefs of Staff of the Army (Johnson) and Air Force (McConnell), the Chief of Naval Operations (Moorer), and the Commandant of the Marine Corps (Greene)¹

CM-2630-67

Washington, September 9, 1967.

SUBJ

Attached Memorandum

1. I have read with great interest and very substantial agreement the attached memorandum written by General DePuy regarding the aftermath of the war in Vietnam. Just the other day I related to you an anecdote concerning General Jacquot, a distinguished and very senior French general who at one time was CINCENT, as to the effects of the French Wars in Indochina and Algeria upon the morale and stability of the French Armed Forces. At that time, I expressed the apprehension that the American Armed Forces could lose the support of the American people in pursuing the war in Vietnam.

2. General DePuy's memorandum carries my thought a bit further, because I was thinking in terms of the present while he is thinking in terms of the aftermath of the Vietnamese war. Nevertheless, I

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Col. R.N. Ginsburgh's Reports. Secret; Eyes Only. In a September 23 covering note to the President, Rostow wrote: "Bob Ginsburgh made this sensitive in-house document available to me on a personal basis. It reflects a real anxiety among our best military; although they may be over-impressed with the Fulbrights and Galbraiths of this world." The notation "L" on the covering note indicates that the President saw the memorandum. The memorandum can also be found at the U.S. Army Military History Institute, Harold K. Johnson Papers, Close-hold #3, 372-391.

think his points are well taken and should be earnestly considered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Earle G. Wheeler

Attachment

Memorandum From the Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities (DePuy) to the Director, Joint Staff (Goodpaster)

Washington, September 8, 1967.

SUBJECT

The End of the War in Vietnam and Its Aftermath

1. Without debating the desirability of the matter I am convinced that the war in Vietnam will be brought to a close at US initiative sometime within the next 18 months. I am further convinced that a major effort in this direction will be mounted no later than the traditional Christmas cease-fire in December of this year.

2. The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the military services, and the country as a whole, should be greatly concerned about the after-taste. If US disengagement has the flavor of a military defeat, or even military frustration, it will take years to repair the damage to morale, the traditions, and even the concept for employment of military forces in the national defense.

3. We have lived through one such experience in the case of Korea. Without reopening the details of the debate which took place at the end of the Korean war, it can be said that public attention was not focused on the successful defense of South Korea but instead was focused on the restrictions and inhibitions on the use of military force. The after-taste which persists to this day was that the military operations had been frustrated and were therefore not successful. However, for reasons political and psychological, the war was terminated by the highest authorities in the land.

4. It is not difficult to visualize a similar denouement in Vietnam. The fact is, that the North Vietnamese have been clearly and unmistakably prevented from taking over South Vietnam by military force. We now are faced with the choice of describing this as a military success or a military failure. This is not an easy choice to make and it may even be impossible to make such a choice, but there are some powerful reasons why the matter should be addressed and carefully thought

out by the Joint Chiefs of Staff themselves and by the services individually and collectively:

a. Many brave lives have been spent and the families of those soldiers, sailors, air men and marines deserve to be told that these lives were not spent in vain—that they were spent in the process of achieving a very important national military objective—the very objective we set out to attain in the first place.

b. If the after-taste is not one of success from a military standpoint, one can foresee enormous problems in the post-war period in connection with the rationale for military forces. In short, there will be many who say that military forces are not able to cope with wars of national liberation and that therefore, such forces need not be maintained.

c. The organization, tactics and techniques of the military forces will be thrown open to question and doubt as a part of the same reaction which pertains to paragraph 4b above.

d. American military forces have a tradition of success on the battlefield from which stems much of their strength, discipline, and effectiveness. It would be tragic if this tradition were to be sacrificed through a misinterpretation of the military outcome of the war in Vietnam.

5. It is already clear that the pressures of an election year will cause partisans of various kinds to accentuate any differences, real or imagined, between the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Administration on the conduct of the war. However well-meaning these attempts may be, and disregarding the substance of the issues, there is a very real danger that the net effect will suggest a military failure where in fact there has been none.

6. What I am suggesting is that the Joint Chiefs of Staff might find it highly desirable in the long range interests of the United States and the armed forces to accentuate the positive in their discussions and testimony, not so much in terms of future prospects but in terms of concrete accomplishments already evident from both a strategic and tactical standpoint in Vietnam. In short, and given the limited nature of the war, the main military objective has already been accomplished.

7. I recommend that you discuss this with the Chairman so that he may, if he sees any merit in the proposal, in turn discuss it with the other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

W. E. DePuy
Major General, USA

310. Telegram From the Embassy in France to the Department of State¹

Paris, September 9, 1967, 1340Z.

3070. From Kissinger.

After the Thursday evening meeting² I phoned M from Washington and asked him to request A to return to Paris. My reason was to give M a pretext for recontacting Bo—though I did not suggest it—and to balance M's naive humanitarianism with some political knowledge. Also I wanted A to lend his weight to any message to Bo.

I saw M and A within an hour of my arrival. (A arrived in Paris half an hour after I did.) M began the conversation by telling me that he had seen Bo on Friday Sept 8. He had called him after my phone call and received an appointment within 15 minutes. He had informed Bo of my request that A return to Paris. In his characteristic naive manner M told Bo that A and he would vouch for me but that he knew me for only 5 years. Therefore if Bo wanted additional reassurance perhaps Millionshikov could be invited to come to Paris and verify the origin of the Hanoi mission. Bo who was extremely affable throughout rejected this proposal. He said that the existing channel of M, A and K was quite satisfactory. Moreover there was a great need for secrecy and for this reason the number of people involved should be kept to an absolute minimum. Bo then asked how long I planned to stay in Paris. When M said about ten days Bo replied that if there was no bombing of Hanoi something could well happen in that period. As M was leaving Bo said that Pugwash had served as a useful pretext to start the conversations but that it was now necessary to keep the info to the smallest group possible. (These remarks which run so counter to M's instincts have dampened his ardor for informing the Continuing Committee of Pugwash.)

A then asked me why I had requested him to return to Paris. I replied that I wanted to be blunt. For the last 10 days A and M had presented very forceful arguments about the bombing of Hanoi on August 21, 22 and 23 and the need to continue existing restraints. I did not agree with many of these views and I was convinced that the bombing on August 21, 22 and 23 was the result of technical military judg-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA. Top Secret; Flash; Nodis; Pennsylvania. Received at 11:07 a.m.

² Rusk met with Bundy, Read, and Kissinger at 11:10 p.m. on Thursday, September 7. (Johnson Library, Rusk Appointment Book, 1967) For Kissinger's instructions, see Document 307.

ments unrelated to the current proposal. Nevertheless I had transmitted their views as fairly as possible to our responsible officials. Now it seemed to me they had an obligation to present our case to the other side with equal force. From the Washington perspective it appears that a major American initiative has simply been ignored. Nor is this an isolated instance. Our officials have gained the impression that communication with Hanoi is a oneway street. We would not be asked to exercise unilateral restraints over a prolonged period without any signal from Hanoi about our overture. M asked whether Washington would “stand by” during the ten days of my visit here. I replied that Washington was still waiting for some reply to the message of August 25.

A then intervened to say that he thought an early meeting between Bo and me was essential so that Hanoi could send a reply while I was still in Paris. He proposed to call Bo immediately in my presence to set up an appointment for A and M. (*Note: A had arrived 30 minutes after I did so that any prearrangement would have had to be by long distance phone.*) A then called Bo who came to the telephone immediately. A said he had had a long and very important conversation with me and wanted to see Bo, Bo suggested they come immediately. M remembered that his wife was expecting A and M for lunch so the appointment was set for 14:30 Paris time. I shall see A and M at 16:00 and report immediately.³

(*Note: If I leave my apartment I shall inform the Embassy duty officer of a phone contact.*)

Bohlen

³ In telegram 3072 from Paris, September 9, Kissinger reported that Marcovich had stressed that the administration was “growing impatient” because the North Vietnamese had failed to respond to the August 25 message. Bo replied that the message remained under study. In addition to the reply, he was also awaiting authorization for a direct meeting with Kissinger. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA)

311. Memorandum of Telephone Conversation Between Secretary of State Rusk and the President's Special Assistant (Rostow)¹

September 9, 1967.

TELEPHONE CALL FROM MR. WALT ROSTOW

R. just had long talk with the Pres. P. asked R. question re this UN business.² R. simply did not really know. Question is whether Goldberg really knows this is a precarious exercise and we in general should be prepared to get out of it or is he being hard and hopeful about it. Sec. would think more the former than the latter. Sec. had a talk with Goldberg following meeting with the Pres. G. does think a way to get out is to have a further meeting with Mansfield and Morse et al and report to them on the soundings. He thinks the way to close it out is to call the roll and see what the prospects are and look at them and then say to hell with that!³

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Rusk Files: Lot 72 D 192, Telcons, 1961–1969 and Presidential. No classification marking. Transcribed by Rusk's secretary at 12:45 p.m. Rusk and Rostow talked on the telephone between 11:17 and 11:58 a.m. Rostow was with the President at the LBJ Ranch September 6–10. (Johnson Library, President's Daily Diary)

² In speeches in the Senate on May 15, 18, and 24, Mansfield called for U.S. support of a Vietnam peace initiative in the United Nations. See *Congressional Record*, Vol. 113, pp. 12593–12594; 13213–13214; 13728. On August 7 Mansfield publicly called for an end to the bombing of the North, the completion of the barrier, and the reintroduction of the failed UN resolution of January 1966 on Vietnam. In a memorandum to the President responding to Mansfield's points, August 7, Rostow noted U Thant's advice against bringing the question of Vietnam into the United Nations. Rostow added: "The heart of the matter is not the UN, however, but what the USSR can and will do." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Memos to the President, Walt Rostow, Vol. II, 8/3–27/67) The administration began exploring the feasibility of such a resolution. In a memorandum to Rusk, August 29, Sisco wrote: "Bill Bundy tells me the President wants to be sure that Mansfield understands that there is no undertaking to go to the Security Council unless we can get the nine necessary votes and that there is no commitment in connection with such a possible initiative that we would stop the bombing or reduce it." (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S) By early September Goldberg had made quiet approaches to the Representatives of Britain, Canada, Denmark, and Japan on the issue. (Telegram 31350 to Seoul, September 2; *ibid.*)

³ In telegram 67807 to the President, September 9, Rostow confirmed that Rusk had fully conveyed to Goldberg the President's "view of the UN Viet Nam initiative." Goldberg received "soundings" from not only the Soviet delegation but also the British, Canadian, and Australian representatives that implied "opposition or grave reservations" to the proposed resolution. Rusk reported the results of the "soundings" to Mansfield and other Senators who supported the resolution. (*Ibid.*, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, CAP Cables)

The other thing P. has on his mind is some sort of a meeting with Thieu perhaps—however, he is aware that some sort of a bilateral meeting with him might look as though Thieu would be receiving his instructions. Other than that he is thinking of us meeting with Bunker in Honolulu—asked how far Honolulu was from Saigon. Sec. said about same distance as from here—it is a half-way mark. R. said he thought it might be very worthwhile to have a talk with Bunker. R. passing this on as a thought P. has in his mind and Sec. might wish to give it some thought.⁴

Sec. asked if R. would be around this afternoon. R. will. Sec. expects to be getting something more from Kissinger shortly.⁵ A meeting is now going on between the other two and the other fellow. R. said the Pres. is very much interested in that—asked for R. to give him the history of how this came about and R. reviewed the facts with Sec.

⁴ This meeting did not occur until July 1968.

⁵ Rostow telephoned the President on September 11 and reported that Rusk had received a “pretty negative” message from Kissinger. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Rusk Files: Lot 72 D 192, Telcons, 1961–1969 and Presidential) For Kissinger’s report, see Document 315.

312. Memorandum From the President’s Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, September 11, 1967, 8:25 a.m.

Mr. President:

Herewith the pros and cons of attacks on the port of Haiphong and the four airfields (Phuc Yen, MIG base; Cat Bi, MIG capable; Mac Bai, air defense center; Gia Lam, MIG capable and transport).²

Against bombing port of Haiphong:

—Difficult to avoid hitting Soviet and other ships.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam 3 I, Targets. Top Secret. The notation “L” on the memorandum indicates that the President saw it.

² On September 5 attacks on specific targets in the Haiphong restricted area were authorized. Attacks on the Phuc Yen air field were authorized on September 28 but were cancelled. The President did not authorize strikes on the MiG bases until October 23.

—Alternative offloading facilities available with inconvenience, either across the beaches or at other smaller ports.

—Weather prospects make it likely that attacks could only be intermittent and, therefore, closing of the Haiphong port by bombing may not be possible unless accompanied by intensive mining of harbor approaches.

—Bombing debate would intensify, both here and abroad, as risks of confrontation with Soviet Union and Communist China increased or were judged to have increased.

—Heavy civilian casualties probably unavoidable.

Pro:

—Bombing of North Viet Nam has increased normally large dependence on imports for both military and civilian purposes, notably food imports.

—Haiphong warehouses probably contain substantial stocks of military and civilian goods.

—Effective bombing of Haiphong may bring Hanoi close to necessity for decision on ending the war—or asking USSR and Communist China radically to enlarge war under circumstances where a positive response from Moscow and Peiping is not foregone conclusion, given state of war in the South and difficulties of intervening effectively in the South.

Airfields:

Pro:

—Would reduce not merely MIG attacks on our aircraft but free attacking aircraft from anxiety and diversion, increase bombing accuracy, reduce number of jettisoned bombs and improve pilot morale.

—Although remaining MIGs may operate from ChiCom bases thereafter, their effectiveness would be reduced because of their short range.

—Little civilian damage and few, if any, casualties.

—Little or no increase in public controversy over bombing in U.S. or abroad.

Against:

—Attacks are not essential: direct and indirect effects of MIGs are not a vital factor.

—Dispersal of MIGs on airfields, revetments, etc. make it possible that strictly military cost benefit ratio of attacks unfavorable: aircraft and pilot losses may outweigh direct and indirect military gains.

—Possible shifting of aircraft to ChiCom bases would raise issue of sanctuary and increase pressure for airfield attacks inside Communist China.³

Walt

³ The President added the following handwritten note: "in some quarters. (Likely get from Cong, not military)."

313. Memorandum From Secretary of Defense McNamara to President Johnson¹

Washington, September 11, 1967.

I understand you were surprised by my comments at the Thursday, September 7, news conference on the so-called infiltration barrier in Vietnam.² At fault may be my failure to acquaint you with the inquiries from the press which forced us to make a public statement. In this memo, I have summarized the current status of the project.

What the System Is. The term "barrier" being popularized by the news media is a misnomer. The anti-infiltration system will not be a wall nor a Maginot Line type of barrier. The system will consist of (1) an obstacle line across part of South Vietnam just south of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and (2) an air-supported interdiction capability centered mostly in Laos. The initial segment of the obstacle line will consist of six strong points, three base camps, and about 8 miles of barbed wire, mines, detection devices and observation posts. This initial obstacle segment is to be installed by November 1, 1967. Thereafter, the obstacle line will be extended to about 15 miles.

The rest of the anti-infiltration system—the major part—will be the air-supported system consisting of air-delivered mines, warning bomblets, and sensor devices. These warning devices and sensors constitute the unique part of the system. When infiltration is detected,

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 2D Barrier. Secret. The notation "L" on the memorandum indicates that the President saw it.

² At the September 7 news conference, McNamara outlined in the barest terms the obstacle system that would be installed along the DMZ, presenting the barrier as a means of avoiding stronger military action in Vietnam. He also stated that the final recommendations of the Stennis subcommittee amounted to a call for widening the war in Vietnam, and thus intimated that the barrier could avoid such a calamity. See *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1967, p. 987.

strike aircraft will be called in. The actual attacks will be carried out by units already in operation in Southeast Asia.

This air-supported system in turn has two parts, (a) an anti-vehicle system, and (b) an anti-personnel system. The systems differ in the types of warning devices and sensors employed as well as the geographic areas for employment. The anti-vehicle system will be concentrated in central Laos, with initial installation in November–December 1967. The anti-personnel system will initially be installed in eastern Laos, about a month after the anti-vehicle system. If necessary, the anti-personnel portion will be extended eastward from the Laos/SVN border toward the obstacle line.

Resources and Costs. The approved program of 525,000 personnel for South Vietnam included the manpower for the anti-infiltration system. The two year costs (FY 1967–68) are now estimated at about \$780 million. Nearly 60 percent of these costs are for munitions which would have been procured in one form or another in any event. The remaining costs are for R&D, new sensors, and modification of existing aircraft to deploy and monitor the mines and sensors.

Why Is the "Barrier" Necessary. To counter the infiltration of men and supplies from North Vietnam, we have used air and sea power against North Vietnam; air power and ambush operations in Laos; and air, ground, and sea actions south of the DMZ. For the period September 1, 1966 to August 31, 1967, we flew over 40,000 attack sorties in Laos and over 50,000 attack sorties in the southernmost portion of North Vietnam. We have increased the U.S. fighting strength in the northern part of South Vietnam by more than 30 percent since December 31, 1966. Yet the infiltration not only continues but has increased. One of our impediments in interdicting the enemy has been our inability to locate him and concentrate our firepower. Any attempt to more precisely locate the enemy, accompanied by selective interdiction in depth, offers the potential to reduce his effectiveness.

Expected Benefits and Risks. We do not expect to stop infiltration cold. Dr. George Kistiakowsky, one of our consultants on the project, expects, however, that truck attrition can be increased two or three hundred percent. He thinks we may get thirty percent attrition against personnel. Our present personnel interdiction level is surely much less—recent prisoner reports indicate it may not exceed two percent. While the effectiveness of the system will not be known for three to six months, the new system will dramatize North Vietnam's involvement in the war as well as our essentially defensive operations in South Vietnam. Furthermore, if effective at all, the components should be useful in other parts of Southeast Asia (or the world) where selective detection and strikes are desired.

To be realistic, Dr. Kistiakowsky's forecasts may be optimistic. The system is comprised of numerous elements which must mesh well for

effectiveness. Research, planning, production, and training are proceeding concurrently on many of the elements. Initial results may be degraded as a result. In addition, the aircraft delivering the mines and sensors, and monitoring the anti-vehicular and anti-personnel subsystems, may be vulnerable to significant attrition. There is the risk, too, that expectations for impressive early results will create clamor to substitute the new anti-infiltration system for other military measures.

The Military View. Opinion among the military ranges from General Wheeler's advocacy and optimism to General Greene's opposition. For the most part, the Chiefs and General Westmoreland look more favorably upon the idea now than they did a year, or even six months, ago. General Wheeler told the Stennis Subcommittee³ that he was "... almost positive that the sensors and munitions that we are developing will give us the capability of obstructing and disrupting the flow of men and material to the South." General McConnell was less enthusiastic in telling the Subcommittee:⁴ "It will certainly contribute to some extent. I do not believe that it will contribute to the extent that the most enthusiastic proponents believe that it will." General Greene said:⁵ "From the very beginning I have been opposed to the project. My feeling is that the job could be done by the addition of ... troops operating on a mobile basis below the DMZ and supported by tremendous quantities of naval gunfire, air and artillery support." General Westmoreland's staff said in Saigon in July that "We hold high expectations that the system, providing it meets design specifications, will complement greatly our on-going anti-infiltration efforts."

My Press Conference Remarks. Planning and development of this system have been underway for over a year. As work progressed, the amount of outside inquiry increased. As the Chiefs' responses indicate, Senator Stennis and the Preparedness Subcommittee showed particular interest in the project and there were leaks from the Committee to the press. General Westmoreland wired on August 26, 1967, that, because of increasing media interest, public affairs guidance for the project would be required in the near future. Press comment increased during the first week of September, culminating in Joseph Kraft's article from Saigon on the morning of my press conference. I was forced to reply—I chose to do so by a short statement. Copies of my statement and Kraft's article are attached.⁶

Robert S. McNamara

³ In testimony on August 16.

⁴ In testimony on August 22–23.

⁵ In testimony on August 28.

⁶ Neither printed. Kraft's editorial asserted that the only benefit of the barrier would be an end to the bombing of the North and an opportunity for the opening of peace talks. See *The New York Times*, September 8, 1967.

314. Telegram From the Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs (Carver) to Director of Central Intelligence Helms¹

Saigon, September 11, 1967, 0203Z.

CAS 1826. For Knight only from Funaro.² Rybat Wren.

1. So far, our mission frustratingly unproductive since MACV stonewalling, obviously under orders. Unless or until I can persuade Westmoreland to amend those orders, serious discussion of evidence or substantive issues will be impossible.

2. Since root problems, as we all recognize, lie much more in political public relations realm than in substantive difference, I had hoped to get Sharp, Westmoreland, Komer and Bunker agreement on presentational packaging question before addressing evidence and specific figures. Variety of circumstances, however, torpedoed this plan. In Bangkok on 8 September Sharp's morning obligations at SEATO and my 1415 plane made 1300–1330 only possible time for our meeting. As Sharp coming up Embassy stairs, he grabbed by Hannah who, when informed Sharp going to 1300 appointment with CAS Washington representative, stood stiffly on his prerogatives as DCM and swept Sharp into his office. Thus I missed Sharp, though I was able to give gist of Wofact position to Admiral Ready. When team arrived Saigon 8 September, we learned both Westmoreland and Komer had taken off for weekend of leave in, respectively, Manila and Bangkok. Thus working sessions had to commence without controlling policy questions resolved.

3. On 9 September, MACV J2 and staff devoted whole day to briefing us on revised MACV estimate, which widened rather than narrowed our differences. MACV now sticking on 119,000 main and local force figure, 29,000 admin services, 65,000 guerrillas and 85,000 political cadre for (by no coincidence) military and political or total of 298,000. MACV also adamant that no figure or quantified estimate be given for other elements VC organization such as self defense, secret self defense, assault youth, etc. (14.3 draft figures are 121,000 main and local force, 40–60,000 range on admin service, 60–100,000 range on guerrillas, 90,000 on political cadre, and 120,000 for others.)³

¹ Source: Central Intelligence Agency, DCI (Helms) Files, Job 80–R1720R, GAC Files, Folder 9, Misc. Documents—1967 to 1975. Secret; Priority Director. The telegram was an attachment to a memorandum from Carver to Helms, November 28, 1975. (Ibid.)

² Knight was Helms' pseudonym; Funaro was Carver's. Carver led a delegation of representatives from CIA, DIA, and INR to Saigon in order to resolve discrepancies between MACV and CIA regarding enemy order of battle estimates.

³ This is a reference to NIE 14.3, which was being updated. See Document 397.

4. 10 September devoted to systematic review of evidence and methodology on admin service and guerrillas. We did not argue 2,000 drop in main and local force (which probably defensible) or 5,000 drop in political cadre which, at the moment, was secondary issue. I attempted to clear atmosphere by opening session with strong pitch for careful look at data category by category, without considering ultimate total until analysis each separate category completed, and by outlining how presentational and public relations issue could be handled in fashion beneficial to MACV and US Government credibility wherever we come out. I also explained, in low key and with all possible tact, that National Estimates were DCI estimates; that other USIB members could dissent, but no one could tell the USIB Chairman⁴ what his estimate had to be. My remarks seemed well received but had no influence on the behavior of General Davidson⁵ or his subordinates.

5. 14.3 case on admin service and guerrilla figures most ably presented by Messrs. Adams and Hyland.⁶ Though to discomfiture of our hosts this case patently stronger than MACV's, it waved aside by General Davidson. Two examples convey the picture: estimate draft figures include 17,000 admin service at district level; MACV only accepts 5,000. Mr. Adams explained how our district level figure developed from admin to combat troop ratio extrapolated from documentary evidence covering 14 districts. General Davidson tore into this, saying 14 district base too slim for extrapolation of valid nationwide figure. Soon thereafter, however, officer who presented MACV case on this point had to admit (in response Davidson's own questions) that MACV 5,000 figure based on only three districts and, even here, MACV had made downward adjustment in what documents actually said. No matter, Davidson would not budge. When challenging MACV's adamant refusal to quantify estimate of irregulars (self defense, secret self defense), we pointed out 14.3 draft figures taken unchanged from July 1967 MACV study on irregulars. Again, no matter, no give. Even DIA team most irritated. After session, Mr. Fowler⁷ grumbled "We did not travel 8,000 miles to be insulted."

6. Variety of circumstantial indicators—MACV juggling of figures its own analysts presented during August discussions in Washington, MACV behavior, and tacit or oblique lunchtime and corridor admissions by MACV officers, including Davidson—all point to inescapable conclusion that General Westmoreland (with Komer's encouragement)

⁴ Helms was Chairman of the U.S. Intelligence Board.

⁵ General Phillip Davidson, Chief of MACV J-2 (Intelligence).

⁶ Samuel Adams, an analyst in the CIA's Office of Current Intelligence, and William Hyland, Chief of the CIA's Office of National Estimates Far East Branch.

⁷ George Fowler, principal DIA analyst for Vietnam.

has given instruction tantamount to direct order that VC strength total will not exceed 300,000 ceiling. Rationale seems to be that any higher figure would not be sufficiently optimistic and would generate unacceptable level of criticism from the press. This order obviously makes it impossible for MACV to engage in serious or meaningful discussion of evidence or our real substantive disagreements, which I strongly suspect are negligible.

7. I hope to see Komer and Westmoreland tomorrow (11 Sept) and will endeavor to loosen this straitjacket.⁸ Unless I can, we are wasting our time. To show, however, that we are willing to go even beyond the last mile, Messrs. Hyland, Moor and Adams are going to sit down with MACV's working level analysts and review the evidence on admin service, guerrillas and political cadre document by document.

8. For cosmetic reasons, given the situation and the fact that Komer and Westmoreland will not arrive until 11 September, it would be a political error for us to leave on 12 September as planned.⁹ Thus we will have to remain an additional day or two for appearance's sake if nothing else. If I can budge Westmoreland, this whole matter can be resolved to everyone's satisfaction in a few hours of serious discussion. If I cannot, no agreement is possible.

9. *[less than 1 line of source text not declassified]* have both seen this message. *[less than 1 line of source text not declassified]* left afternoon 10 September.

⁸ CIA telegram CAS 1926 from Saigon, September 12, reported on the next day's unproductive meetings among Carver, Davidson, and Komer. In a position paper presented to the MACV representatives (sent to Helms as CIA telegram CAS 1925 from Saigon, September 12) Carver retreated on the quantification of irregulars, which had been the main obstacle to consensus on the part of MACV. He held firm, however, on the figures for the numbers of political cadre and those enemy personnel in the administrative services. (Central Intelligence Agency, DCI (Helms) Files, Job 80-R1720R, GAC Files, Folder 9, Misc. Documents—1967 to 1975)

⁹ In CIA telegram 34454 to Saigon, September 11, Helms requested that the team not leave Saigon without his prior approval. (Ibid.)

315. Telegram From the Embassy in France to the Department of State¹

Paris, September 11, 1967, 1901Z.

3143. From Kissinger. As requested I am submitting my comments on the text handed by Bo to M this morning:²

Substance of the message: The first paragraph of the message is ambiguous about American "conditions." It could refer to the proposal of negotiations or the threat of resuming attacks on Hanoi.

The last paragraph represents an advance over those previous exchanges with which I am familiar in three respects: (1) For the first time Hanoi has answered an American proposal and not closed the door on further negotiations. (2) Hanoi demands the recognition of the NLF but seems to have dropped the previous insistence that the NLF be accepted as the "most authentic representative" (I do not have the full text available). (3) It states that negotiations would follow a bombing cessation. (*Note:* These views probably reflect incomplete knowledge of all exchanges.)

Future course: We have two choices: (A) To take the message at face value and end the A–M channel; (B) To treat the message as a first

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA. Top Secret; Nodis; Pennsylvania.

² Telegram 3097 from Paris, September 11, described the meeting that day between Bo and Marcovich at 9:30 a.m. and transmitted the Embassy's translation of Bo's message, which was in French. (*Ibid.*) The English translation reads: "The essence of the American propositions is the stopping of the bombing under conditions. The American bombing of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam is illegal. The United States should put an end to the bombing and cannot pose any conditions. The American message has been communicated after an escalation of the attacks against Hanoi and under the threat (menace) of the continuation of the attacks against Hanoi. It is clear that this constitutes an ultimatum to the Vietnamese people. The Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam energetically rejects the American propositions. The position of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam is that the United States should cease definitely and without conditions the bombing and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam. It should withdraw American troops and satellites from South Viet-Nam, recognize the National Liberation Front of South Viet-Nam and let the Vietnamese people themselves regulate their internal affairs. It is only after the unconditional stopping by the United States of the bombing and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, that it would be possible to engage in conversations." In a covering memorandum transmitting telegram 3097 to the President, September 11, Rostow wrote: "Here is the latest from Kissinger. Today Bo responded to M with the same rigid formulation with which we are so familiar. The only possible point of interest is that he asked for a reply. Secretaries Rusk and McNamara are working on a reply, which should come over mid-afternoon. This sounds to me a little as though they plan to make the contact in Paris public. But it is barely conceivable that it is the opening move in having a Bo–Kissinger conversation." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, PENNSYLVANIA) The English translation is printed in Herring, *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 737–738.

step in complicated bargaining process. The advantage of the first course is that it could bring home to Hanoi that there is a penalty for failure to negotiate. Its disadvantage is that it will close off the A–M channel and severely limit the negotiating option for several months at least. Also, it leaves the public record more ambiguous than one would like, especially with respect to the bombing of Hanoi.

The advantage of the second course is that it permits a fuller exploration of Hanoi's mood and intentions. Also, it will give us an opportunity to improve the public record. The danger is that unless carefully handled it may convey a sense of excessive nervousness to Hanoi.

Nevertheless, on balance I would favor going along a little further with the A–M channel, especially in view of Bo's comments on Saturday and his repeated reference to an answer this morning. Even if Hanoi has decided to negotiate, it would begin with a rather intransigent tone for its public record. An answer could have the following elements: It could refer to the last sentence of Hanoi's message and point out that the American proposal envisages an end of bombing to be followed by the opening of negotiations. If Hanoi read the American message as involving conditions this might reflect a misunderstanding. K is in Paris and available for the clarification of both messages. With respect to the bombing of Hanoi we could say that this problem was dealt with by our offer to end the bombing altogether. We might then draw a distinction between those actions which precede the opening of negotiations such as the first sentence of the last paragraph and items which are the subject of negotiations themselves such as the list in the second sentence of the last paragraph (withdrawal of troops, etc.). It would certainly be appropriate for Hanoi to place the latter issues on the agenda of any discussions together with other items which we might wish to introduce. There could be another reference to any availability for clarifications.

On another matter, I discussed with M what he would do if this approach failed. I told him that any public disclosure would wreck not only this initiative but also threaten comparable efforts which might be undertaken in the future. I also told him that I would dissociate myself from him and A if he ever used the information about this effort publicly. M gave me his word that he would make no public statement "even if you drop an H-bomb on Hanoi." However, if the bombing of Hanoi is resumed he plans to make a full report to the Elysée. He offered to show me the text before he submitted it and to give me an opportunity to correct it.

Bohlen

316. Editorial Note

On September 12, 1967, Director of Central Intelligence Richard Helms submitted to President Johnson a report entitled "Implications of an Unfavorable Outcome in Vietnam." Written by intelligence analysts in the Office of National Estimates, the report dealt with the impact of the failure to sustain the non-Communist state in South Vietnam. This failure would not come as a result of a complete military and political collapse of the U.S. effort in Vietnam, but would evolve from the likely compromise solution that would result from a peace settlement negotiated within a relatively brief period of time and to the advantage of the Vietnamese Communists. The risks of an unfavorable outcome in Vietnam were considerable. The authors of the report described the permanent damage that would result to the United States in the international arena, the internal dissension that would follow, and the destabilization that would arise in other areas of Southeast Asia. They mitigated their conclusions, however, by suggesting that "such risks are probably more limited and controllable than most previous argument has indicated." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Outcome CIA Study)

317. Memorandum From the President's Assistant (Jones) to President Johnson¹

Washington, September 12, 1967, 1:25–3:10 p.m.

SUBJECT

Weekly luncheon with Secretaries Rusk and McNamara, Walt Rostow and George Christian (General Harold Johnson also was present)

The meeting convened in the West sitting room with the President asking how we arrived at the 30 targets.

McNamara said the number was originally 427. The Joint Chiefs did not recommend 77. Of the 350 which they did recommend, 320 were approved including those that were approved last week. In re-examining the 30, the Joint Chiefs recommended against 13 of the 30, including small targets such as 4 or 5 small POL's, a small tire factory

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Meeting Notes File, Folder #4, 1/67-11/67. Top Secret.

and concrete works. Of the 17 remaining, some were redesignated targets. McNamara pointed out that CINCPAC has been adding targets, thus the total number is increased. In summary, McNamara said 324 targets have been authorized, 262 have been struck, and 62 have not been struck, but have been authorized.

The President said the new Polish Ambassador was quite vehement when he presented his credentials to the President Tuesday morning.² The President said the Polish Ambassador remarked that peace was just ready in Hanoi when the United States bombed.

Secretary Rusk replied that "if his Foreign Minister had not tried to play tricks when we sent messages, he would not feel that way."³ Rusk said he will review this with him.

McNamara said we have an adequate bank of targets for the period that lies ahead. He said probably about 18 of the targets are in the 10 mile circle of Hanoi. McNamara said General McConnell feels that we do not need to ask for any new target authorization today.

Rusk said that restrikes cause him no problem, subject to the 10 mile circle.

McNamara pointed out "the weather has been very bad. Only a couple got into the Haiphong area." McNamara said that of those that haven't been approved yet, the Joint Chiefs would recommend 29. Of the total of 29, 18 are in the Hanoi area and 10 or 11 in the Haiphong area. Beyond that, 36 more targets for a total of 65. In the 29 targets there are 5 which even McConnell questions, McNamara said. For example, he questions Gia Lam. But McNamara said we are not ready to ask for these authorizations yet.

Rusk said he was opposed to Gia Lam "because I may have to go in there myself."

The President asked "have we just hit one of the ports authorized last week?"

McNamara said, yes—just Cam Pha. McNamara said the pilots reports indicated some extensive damage but no photo reports are in yet to establish the damage. McNamara pointed out that these damaged facilities will not stay out long because they are primarily goods rather than facilities that were bombed.

Rusk reported that his State Department briefing of the Baltimore *Sun* editorial board proved very successful.

² The presentation of credentials by the Ambassadors of Poland, Jamaica, and Ecuador occurred 12:23–12:28 p.m. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary)

³ Reference is to the Marigold exercise of the previous year in which Polish diplomats acted as intermediaries in an aborted effort to open negotiations between North Vietnam and the United States. See *Foreign Relations, 1964–1968*, volume IV.

The President said Ambassador Bunker asked him to spend some time with Eugene Locke. The President said he did that Monday night and the two of them went over the “Blueprint” which Locke brought back from Vietnam.⁴ The President said he asked Locke to break it down. He wants to take what has been done in Vietnam and try to point up what has genuinely happened there. The President noted that no one can carry an election if he does not show hope of victory to his people. The President said General Johnson and General Larson’s appearances were helpful, but he pointed out that we need to wrap up a package for the things that have gone well and list them, along with the problems that still lie ahead. On balance, we have not been losing, the President said, and we will change it a lot more. The President said we should say that the enemy cannot hold up under this pressure.

The President then asked General Johnson to have the Joint Chiefs “search for imaginative ideas to put pressure to bring this war to a conclusion.” He said he did not want them to just recommend more men or that we drop the Atom bomb. The President said he could think of those ideas. The President asked Johnson to have the Joint Chiefs come up with some new programs. He pointed out that when this Congress comes back in January they will try to bring the war to a close either by getting out or by escalating significantly. The President asked Walt Rostow to put on a chart the good items represented in the “Blueprint.”

The President then read excerpts from the “Blueprint.” (Copy of this is attached.)⁵

After reading paragraph B from the “Blueprint” memorandum concerning approval of an elite battalion-size South Vietnamese force with U.S. advisors to raid enemy supply bases in Laos—Secretary Rusk replied that we can do a good many things with Souvanna Phouma if the President will spend an hour with him when he is here this fall.

The President said yes, I have already agreed to that.

In response to Paragraph A concerning approval and expedition of “Dye Marker” program for electronic devices in Laos to be used in

⁴ See Document 296. Locke also listed his recommendations in a background memorandum of September 12. His recommendations for South Vietnam included, under the general category of improving security in the countryside, raising ARVN effectiveness by engaging in combined operations with U.S. forces; a “crash” program to put U.S. advisers with the RF/PF; additional Korean troops; expedited delivery of troops to MACV to be used as “maneuver battalions”; and the expansion of riverine patrols and assault forces. In addition, Locke advised building more jails to detain suspects of the VCI; the use of other government organizations to engage in RD work; an effort to rid the GVN of corruption and make it more efficient; and broadening the political base of the national government. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Chron. File on Negotiations—1967) This memorandum is printed in part in *Foreign Relations*, 1964–1968, vol. XXVIII, Document 310.

⁵ Not attached, but see footnote 4 above.

connection with the air program—McNamara said that “Dye Marker” is a barrier and he does not expect any trouble in Laos.

Again referring to Paragraph B (the South Vietnamese and U.S. troops raiding the enemy supply bases in Laos)—General Johnson said it will become known in Laos because of the way the correspondents travel out there. General Johnson pointed out that this meant violation of the Geneva Accords of 1962. He also said that this action would create no military problem.

Rusk pointed out that the key problem is getting Souvanna Phouma aboard.

The President said if we get Souvanna aboard, then should we go ahead and do it?

Rusk replied, yes.

The President asked that we give some thought on how we can do this.

Rusk said maybe we can get some Laotian troops in on this.

McNamara says this is worth doing if we can do it, and if we can keep from destroying Souvanna.

The President then read from Paragraph D concerning “obtaining for Laos corridor work additional propellor type aircraft by the beginning of the next dry season.”

McNamara replied that there are “lots of aircraft there now.” He pointed out that the weather has been bad and also that not many trucks have been moving down the corridor. McNamara said that Westmoreland has not asked for any propellor aircraft that has not been approved.

General Johnson agreed with McNamara.

Rusk asked “if we couldn’t fly a good many planes out of Laos as Laotian planes, even with our pilots.”

McNamara said “we don’t have to Dean, because we have time . . .”

The President then read from paragraph 2-B concerning additional U.S. advisors.

McNamara said that that’s already part of the 525,000 commitment.

In response to the President’s reading from the “Blueprint” of obtaining additional troops from other free world nations—McNamara pointed out that Prime Minister Holt of Australia said he wanted to wait until after the elections before he sends more troops.

The President replied, “I think I could tell Clark that it’s hard to fight a war if we have to wait on the elections.” We had to do that with the Koreans.

McNamara said we should also really move on Thailand. McNamara pointed out that last week the Thais said they would send 3,000 instead of the original 10,000 request. He said it's no use talking in small terms. It would be better that they send none than 3,000.

[1 paragraph (1½ lines of source text) not declassified]

Rusk said we might bait the Thais by offering to leave behind U.S. equipment such as jeeps, trucks, etc. after the war is over.

The President said "OK . . . go ahead."

The President then read further from the "Blueprint" memorandum concerning the expansion on a crash basis to maximum extent of our absorptive capacity of river patrol boats and river assault boats; also intensifying our operation in North Vietnam in every productive way short of bringing Russia or China into the war; and building adequate provincial jails on a crash basis to screen and detain Viet Cong infrastructure, plus jails on islands to permanently hold Viet Cong infrastructure. The President said Ambassador Locke reported that some of the Viet Cong have been captured so many times and put in jail and then the Americans leave the vicinity and the Viet Cong come back in and release their prisoners. The President cited one example of a Viet Cong who was captured, blindfolded and put on the helicopter for evacuation. The captured Viet Cong reached out and fastened his seat belt with the blindfold on without any trouble. The President said that the captured Viet Cong had less trouble fastening his seatbelt blindfolded than Mrs. Johnson does with both hands and her eyes open. The President also reported that Locke said there is no question that we were right in changing the pacification program from AID to Westmoreland. The President said he understands Bunker and Westmoreland were sending in this "Blueprint" report for our approval.

McNamara said that 90% of the military aspects of the "Blueprint" are already appropriated.

At this point —2:10 p.m.—the group went into the family dining room for lunch.

[Here follows brief discussion of Greece and Turkey.]

The President suggested that a speech or magazine or newspaper article be written saying that if South Vietnam, the Philippines, Korea, Thailand, New Zealand, etc. have a population of about 100 million—don't match the American troop commitment, then they are really going to give Johnson hell.

The President then directed McNamara to have all his service people exposed as much as possible in the movies, etc. to the bond drive. The President said "we must finance this war."

The President later asked if Mansfield will be back with his U.N. plan and does Goldberg know it won't work.

Rusk said he knows our policy. Rusk pointed out that a nose count at the U.N. indicated that it just won't work.

The President asked why don't we take a plan to the U.N., then get defeated.

Rusk said that some U.S. Senators such as Morse would misinterpret this as a repudiation by the world body of the United States policy in Vietnam.

The President said John Knight wrote a pretty good article.

Rusk replied that he sat at the table with Knight when the Publishers were here last week and reported that Knight "seemed like a fellow who agrees with you but didn't want to get caught at it." Rusk said Knight felt the reporters in Vietnam were using "too much muscle and were all acting like junior Presidents."

At 2:40 p.m. General Johnson left. Johnson told the President that General Earle Wheeler was feeling fine and the doctors said he is making exceptional progress. Johnson reported Wheeler is due to be released from the hospital Wednesday, September 13, and that he probably would be calling the President for an appointment.

The President directed me to tell Marvin Watson that General Wheeler should be brought in whenever he calls.

The President then took up the Kissinger report.⁶ The President asked Rusk if he has confidence in Kissinger's trustworthiness and character; is he a dove and a critic of our policy.

Rusk said he is confident of Kissinger's trustworthiness and character and that basically Kissinger is for us.

Walt Rostow pointed out that Henry Kissinger is a good analyst and his only weakness is that "he may go a little soft when you get down to the crunch."

Concerning the peace overtures, the President asked why shouldn't we quit explaining so much and just say "we will stop bombing, if a conference is arranged and if it will lead to fruitful discussions."

The President then asked, "who is M?"

Rusk replied—Marcovich, and he's not a Communist. Rusk said A is a Communist.

Rusk said that he feels it is important to keep this message the same as what we said before. Otherwise, we would be charged with bad faith. Rusk also pointed out that the great tendency among the Communist nations is to get us to say something new.

⁶ Document 315.

McNamara said "I do not see the need. It weakens the public appeal." McNamara pointed out that "they charged us with conditions and I think it should be unconditional."

The President asked why we couldn't agree to stop bombing if it will lead to prompt and productive discussions.

He pointed out that if they continue to fight, then we can go back after our discussions have begun, and resume our bombing policy.

McNamara said he agrees with the President.

Rusk said "It really turns on what our policy is. Are we prepared to go through with a series of talks that may not be productive. Then if the talks are not productive, you are faced with the decision of resuming the bombing. I'll go along if you want to change our policy."

The President pointed out "we did not have reciprocity when we had the bombing pause. The conditions are prompt and productive discussions to have a bombing cessation. That has more conditions than the pause."

Rusk said he does not mind leaving the sentence out. However, he knows that if we are not prepared to follow through, then we have a public record and they may make us eat our words.

Rusk said he saw Ambassador Lucet today who reported that [Mai] Van Bo said he had nothing new from Hanoi, and any new peace movements would have to come elsewhere. "My guess is that we won't get very much from talks. We will be faced with the position of resuming the bombing because the other side had bad faith," Rusk said. Rusk also said that if we call it a permanent cessation, then we are faced with having to break the talks and be criticized by the world, and if we call it a pause, then the talks are off anyway.

Rusk said that unless we are willing to redesign the proposal of August 25,⁷ the issue is how the proposal will read. "If you want to impress the dives, you drop the third paragraph. If you want to protect our flank, you keep it in."

McNamara said "don't change the proposal, just drop the sentence."

Rostow proposed the compromise using the basic proposal of August 25 with the caveat of taking out what McNamara wanted out but protecting Rusk by identifying it by reference to the August 25 proposal. That way Rusk was covered and McNamara got the sentence out. Rusk and Rostow then edited the proposal as follows: "The U.S. Government sought in its proposal of August 25—a proposal which the DRV has in front of it—"

⁷ See Document 293.

Rusk and Rostow then agreed that they were both happy with this. Rusk said "this gives us the flexibility and it gives us a chance to test these fellows again. If we get into serious talks, we must get A and M out of it."

[Here follows brief discussion relating to arms talks.]

The President then turned to the subject of legislation and said he thinks that McNamara should get his bills passed by the Congress before he talks about anything else, including barriers or anything. He believes that we have not flexibility until the appropriations bill is out of Congress.

The luncheon adjourned at 3:10 p.m. and Rusk, McNamara, the President then walked to the South Lawn and to the President's office.

318. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in France¹

Washington, September 12, 1967, 2102Z.

35967. For Kissinger. Ref: Paris 3097.²

1. You should get in touch with M promptly to say that you have a message from USG and that you believe its importance warrants direct communication with Bo. Ask him to convey this promptly to Bo.

2. If Bo agrees to see you, you should give him the English and French texts of the message from the USG, English text of which appears at the end of this cable.

3. We hope this message will provide an opportunity for you to meet with Bo and to use the occasion to probe as far as possible Hanoi's present views and its apparent misunderstanding, unintentional or intentional, of the USG position with respect to negotiations. In order to have free and frank discussion you should state that you are familiar with past contacts and proposals with DRV and welcome an opportunity to see if past misunderstandings can be clarified by such discussion. In this connection you should make following points:

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA. Top Secret; Immediate; Nodis/Pennsylvania. Drafted by Bundy and Katzenbach; cleared by McNamara, Harriman, Walt Rostow, and Read; and approved by Rusk.

² See footnote 2, Document 315.

a. The USG has consistently attempted to phrase its proposals in conciliatory language, seeking to be as realistic as possible, and addressing certain key problems which are essential to the success of any diplomatic approach. The replies of Hanoi have not been responsive to these proposals and have not yet addressed key elements thereof.

b. The failure of Hanoi to deal with these proposals and Hanoi's interjection of outside factors such as specific military actions in the field, have raised doubts in the minds of USG officials as to the willingness of Hanoi to enter into productive discussions. For example, Hanoi's attitude toward the kind of restraint we have employed in this channel is particularly baffling. If we bomb near Hanoi we are accused of bringing pressure. If we voluntarily, and without any suggestion from Hanoi, impose a restraint on our actions and keep this up without time limit—as we have in fact done—we are accused of an ultimatum.

c. Another example of DRV actions that puzzle the USG relates to secrecy. The USG conducted contacts through the Poles which we kept secret but which were divulged by others through a number of sources. The contacts and correspondence of last winter between President Johnson and President Ho were conducted in deepest secrecy, yet Hanoi made them public. This pattern of action led US officials to question whether Hanoi simply seeks a propaganda purpose rather than serious discussions.

4. We would encourage you to use your own background information in line with the above ideas to probe as deeply as you can the attitude of Hanoi. We are interested in your assessment of the possibilities of serious negotiations.

5. English text of US message follows:

Begin Message: The United States Government believes that the September 11 message from the Democratic Republic of North Vietnam may be based on a misunderstanding of the American proposal of August 25. The American proposal contained neither conditions nor threats and should not be rejected on these grounds.

It has been the understanding of the United States Government that the Democratic Republic of Vietnam would be willing promptly to engage in productive discussions leading to peace when there was a cessation of aerial and naval bombardment. The United States Government sought to confirm this fact in its proposal of August 25—a proposal which the Democratic Republic of Vietnam has in front of it.

In the view of the United States Government military activities prior to such cessation are totally irrelevant to the objective of productive discussions leading to peace. In this connection, the United States Government points to the fact that military activities in South Viet-Nam by the forces opposed to the Government of South Viet-Nam were greatly increased during the period in which its proposal was under consideration in Hanoi. Indeed, during the period from August 25 onward, when the United States voluntarily undertook not to conduct bombing action in the vicinity of Hanoi, the forces opposed to the Gov-

ernment of South Viet-Nam acted without any restraint whatsoever and engaged in a particularly determined terrorist campaign aimed at the recent elections there.

The August 25 proposal of the United States Government remains open. *End Message.*

French text of US message follows by septel.

6. The above is written on the assumption that Bo agrees to see you. He must in any event respond to the information from M that you have an important message even though he will probably have to receive additional instructions from Hanoi. You should conduct your initial conversation with M in such a way as to leave open the possibility that the message could be delivered through M and A should Bo be unwilling to see you. Clearly it would be desirable to have A on hand if we have to pursue this course of action. We are anxious to have you talk with Bo but do not want to close the door to the other possibility.

Rusk

319. Summary Notes of the 575th Meeting of the National Security Council¹

Washington, September 13, 1967, noon–12:55 p.m.

Major Issues of the 22nd General Assembly

The President: In the absence of Secretary Rusk, asked Under Secretary Katzenbach to give his estimate of what is likely to cause us real trouble in the forthcoming General Assembly meeting.

[Here follows brief discussion of issues relating to the United Nations that do not involve Vietnam.]

5. As to Vietnam, we didn't have much luck on gaining support for an initiative in the UN Security Council. We may not even get enough support to subscribe our draft resolution; but even if we do,

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, NSC Meetings File, Vol. 4, Tab 57. Secret; Sensitive; For the President Only. According to the President's Daily Diary, Vice President Humphrey presided over the meeting until the President arrived at 12:31 p.m. Also in attendance were McNamara, Rusk, Katzenbach, Sisco, Goldberg, Helms, Nitze, McConnell, Marks, Rostow, Christian, Davis, Smith, and Neal Peterson. (Ibid.)

we would encounter trouble blocking attempts to vote a resolution calling for unilateral cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam.

Mr. Katzenbach said he would defer to Ambassador Goldberg, who would present a paper summarizing the major issues we expect to face in the General Assembly.

[Here follows brief discussion of the Middle East.]

2. *Vietnam*—[Ambassador Goldberg] Summarized his soundings in New York on our proposal to take an initiative in the Security Council. The plan would be to sponsor a resolution calling for the reconvening of the Geneva Conference.

Our friends are timid and reluctant to join us in this initiative. They say they don't know what the end result of such an initiative would be. Amendments could be attached to our resolution which would be difficult to handle. They fear begging a course of action when they cannot estimate where it will end up. If our friends stood with us to the end, there would be little risk of unsatisfactory outcome. However, they do face domestic problems.

The reply to the President's question is that the Soviets oppose our effort to get the Security Council into the Vietnam problem. Of the 15 Council members, only 3 fully support our initiative. They are two Latin American states (Argentina and Brazil) and Nationalist China.

Disagrees with Secretary Rusk, who had said that if our initiative in the Security Council did not succeed this time we could just as easily try it at a later time. This is not so because as of January 1 the Council membership changes. The new composition of the Council will result in our being unable to gain sufficient votes for our resolution, even though we will still retain sufficient support to block action by the Council to which we are opposed. Pakistan replaces Japan on the Council—a net loss in terms of support of our Vietnam policy.

After January 1 the Russians may propose a resolution condemning our bombing of North Vietnam. We could defeat such a resolution.

The outcome of a U.S. initiative in the Council might well end up in disagreement and inconclusively; but he favored going ahead with the initiative even under these predicted circumstances. Many would say the United States initiative had been rebuffed. We would gain support if we tried, even if we failed.

The President: Will someone state the other side of this argument?

Secretary McNamara: Our initiative would end up as a rebuff. He was not concerned about the reaction to our receiving a rebuff, but felt there was a net loss if our opponents could say that the reason we were rebuffed was because of our current bombing policy. This would put pressure on us to end the bombing.

Under Secretary Katzenbach: We can only lose if we undertake an

initiative in the Security Council. We risk facing a situation in which an amendment to our resolution would condemn our bombing policy. Our friends, put in an impossible position, might well choose to abstain. If you knew in advance you could not get a satisfactory resolution, the debate resulting from this effort would not contribute to a peaceful climate.

Ambassador Goldberg: If we took an initiative, the Security Council would flounder in a state of disagreement.

The President: In the event this happened, would we be ahead of where we now are? Senator Mansfield would probably say, yes, we would be; but the Senator does not see clearly all the evils which are predicted. We should wait till Mansfield gets back from Japan to talk to him candidly about the situation as we see it. Those who urged us to take an initiative would say, after the effort failed, they didn't realize that the situation would develop as it had.

[Here follows discussion on arms control and a number of other issues unrelated to Vietnam.]

Bromley Smith

320. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, September 13, 1967, 1015Z.

5825. For the President from Bunker. Herewith my twentieth weekly telegram:

A. General

1. With the elections for President, Vice President, and the Senate behind us cries of anguish have gone up from some of the defeated candidates. Eight of the defeated Presidential candidates issued a written statement declaring that the elections had been fraudulent and that the signers would request the National Assembly to invalidate the elections. Tran Van Huong and Ha Thuc Ky did not join in the declara-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Immediate; Nodis. Received at 7:28 a.m. A notation on the covering memorandum from Rostow transmitting a copy of this telegram to the President indicates that he received it at 5:30 p.m. and that the President saw it. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 8B(1) [B]) This telegram is printed in full in Pike, *The Bunker Papers*, pp. 160–167.

tions. In a second rather general declaration issued yesterday, six of the candidates (Phan Khac Suu, Hoang Co Binh, Truong Dinh Dzu, Tran Van Ly, Nguyen Hoa Hiep, and Vu Hong Khanh) again denounced the “dishonest practices of this government,” the failure of the government ticket to receive more than 35 percent of the total vote in spite of the exertion of pressure and illegal practices, exhorting the people to speak out against this suppression and pointing out to the people and Government of the United States that the policy carried out in Viet-Nam must conform with the will of the Vietnamese people, that otherwise it will be doomed to “bitter and total failure.” The prime beneficiary of concerted action by the defeated candidates would be Truong Dinh Dzu, who ran second, and I believe the other candidates have only limited interest in helping Dzu to further his personal ambitions.

2. Among the Presidential protesters, Dzu seems to be the most active. He ran a notice in the *Saigon Daily News* yesterday morning “apologizing for having missed a meeting with Charles Doe and informs all foreign newsmen that he is available at any time, mornings from 9 to 12:30 at his law office and afternoons at his house from lunch time to 5:00 p.m. Thank you in advance.” He apparently has little else to do.

3. In addition to complaints by the Presidential candidates, one has been filed by an Assembly Deputy, Trieu Van Tuc, and four by voters.

4. Some other protest voices have also been heard. Four student groups have jointly declared that the elections were “rigged and arranged by a foreign hand.” Militant Buddhist leaders told a meeting at the An Quang pagoda on September 9 that the elections had been rigged, but their strongest condemnation was against the government for having signed the new Buddhist charter. I suspect that the government will act to prevent any serious difficulties by such elements.

5. The press in general seems to be taking a more responsible view of the election results than have most of the defeated candidates. The general view taken by the press of the elections seems to be one of a job well done. A number of papers have commented on the need for national solidarity and for the losing candidates to form a loyal opposition. *Thoi Dai* very sensibly told the losers to either cooperate with the government or form an opposition bloc.

6. It does not seem to us that the complaints, fifteen in all, have much substance, or that they provide adequate grounds for invalidation of the elections. However, the losers are not only dissatisfied, but are taking it hard and may give us some difficult moments before the election results are finally certified.

7. The Assembly meets today to announce the temporary results of the election. It will meet again in late September after court rulings

on violations of the election laws have been submitted to it and the Central Election Council has examined complaints with respect to the conduct of the voting. The Assembly must vote by October 2 at the latest on the validity of the elections. While, as I have said, in our judgment it is very doubtful that the Assembly will be able to document to any degree of thoroughness the charges that the Presidential election was rigged, Deputies have not always voted in the past strictly on the basis of facts. In this instance, other pressures and interests could play a significant role in the way they vote. Ky, if he were so inclined could, for example, instruct 30 or so Deputies loyal to him to vote against validation in an effort to discredit or unseat Thieu or he could simply threaten to do so in an effort to exact concessions from Thieu. The eight Deputies who ran on the upper house slate associated with Dzu could also pose a problem as could scattered oppositionists who did not have a stake in orderly Constitutional development.

8. Our initial reading of the mood of the Assembly is that the followers of Tran Van Huong and Ha Thuc Ky will not engage in any efforts to discredit the elections, partly because they hope to be represented in Thieu's government and because one of Ha Thuc Ky's upper house slates has been elected. The combined strength of their followers in the Assembly is about 30 Deputies. The mood of the pro-GVN democratic alliance bloc, the largest bloc in the Assembly, is at this stage harder to gauge. Only two out of the more than 20 members of the bloc who ran for the upper house did so successfully. Piqued by their failure and with an uncertain political future, they might go along with the mood to throw out the elections.

9. We are taking the line with the Deputies that the question of validation is very serious and that unless there is extensive, substantial evidence that the election was rigged, the election of Thieu should be validated. We are also volunteering our impression, based on extensive observation not only by ourselves and our observers but observers from the other countries, that the election was an honest one and that if any cheating took place, it did not affect the outcome. In talking with Thieu yesterday, I impressed on him that a bit of judiciously applied GVN pressure and persuasion would appear to be in order.

10. Only this morning in talking with Ky, I brought up the subject of the Assembly attitude toward the elections. He recalled that he told me before the campaign started that we should expect some protests and disorders after the elections, especially from the An Quang Buddhists and perhaps students also who had been stirred up by the Buddhists, and remarked that a student demonstration was taking place while we were talking. He said that these demonstrations are confined to a relatively small group of so-called leaders in Saigon, but that the rest of the country was calm and quiet. He was quite confi-

dent it would remain so. He said that he understood fully the importance of responsible action by the Assembly in performing its function in regard to the elections and understood what the effect would be on opinion in the United States and elsewhere should it fail to act responsibly. He assured me that means were available to him and the GVN to see that the members acted responsibly and he proposed to do so. This is reassuring in view of some rumors that have come to us that Ky, feeling that he had been snubbed by Thieu and dissatisfied with the way in which the latter was going about the formation of his government, might use his influence to upset the results. He assured me that he had no intention whatever of taking any such irresponsible action.

11. In this immediate post election period the first order of business has been to focus on the effort to put together the new government. There is inevitably a period of maneuvering in which conflicting interests held in check during the campaign period begin to emerge. The Thieu–Ky relationship is being subjected to strain heightened, I fear, by the entourage of each in their attempt to promote their own interests and positions.

12. This has centered around differences of opinion between them regarding appointments to Cabinet posts and Ky's own responsibilities in the new government. These problems were discussed at a meeting of the inner circle of Generals with Thieu and Ky last Monday.² The issues were not resolved then and it was agreed that another meeting would be held on Saturday, the 16th.³

13. The post of Prime Minister is still open. Thieu informed me yesterday that he had offered the post to Tran Van Huong who had turned it down, Thieu said, on the ground that he did not want to serve with Ky. Thieu expressed some relief that Huong had refused since he believed that Huong would find it difficult to work as a member of a team. He is now looking for a capable civilian, a Southerner, preferably a Buddhist, to fill the position. Ky is still insisting on Nguyen Van Loc whom Thieu does not feel has either the stature or the capacity for the job. We are inclined to agree with his estimate.

14. The other matter is Ky's own role and responsibility in the government. He expressed to me this morning his keen disappointment that Thieu had not made any approach to him on this, and said that he had made it very clear when he accepted the Vice Presidential spot that he would not be content with being merely a figurehead for the next four years. If this were to be the case, he would return to the air force. I have constantly urged Thieu to be forthcoming in regard to his relationship with Ky and have said that I would expect that he

² September 11.

³ See Document 332.

would make good use of Ky's energy, abilities, and talents. I have suggested to him, for example, that Ky might be given responsibility for coordination of all of the pacification programs within the government. Yesterday I urged Thieu and this morning Ky to get together and work out this problem openly and frankly between themselves.

15. One of the difficulties has been that members of their entourages out of self-interest try to exacerbate the rivalry. We have a report that at a meeting of the inner circle last Monday, Thieu and Ky agreed that they would dismiss any member of their entourages found to be spreading rumors designed to deepen the rift between them. We are following this matter closely, using both persuasion and some judicious pressure and I have confidence that this can be worked out by the Vietnamese themselves just as the problem of the single military ticket was resolved last June.

16. Both Thieu and Ky are in agreement that the government must be given a new face and that it must put forward a dynamic program which will enlist the enthusiasm and support of the people. In this connection we are developing a statement of suggested policies and programs which we intend to put in their hands for use in preparation of a statement or declaration to the people of the new government's program.⁴

B. Political

17. After all the time and effort that went into the preparation and organization of the Presidential and Senate elections, it is not surprising that they have continued to dominate political developments during the past week.

18. As I reported on Sept 9 (Saigon 5550),⁵ I delivered your warm and encouraging message to Gen Thieu the previous evening. Sub-

⁴ In a September 10 memorandum to the Ambassador, Lansdale suggested ways to advise and assist the newly-constituted GVN. He cautioned against the application of direct pressure on the Vietnamese leadership due to nationalistic pride and political inexperience. He suggested that small, informal lunches between top Vietnamese and American officials would provide the best means for jointly deciding upon critical actions, which included cooperation between Thieu and Ky, formation of a broadly-based government with integral civilian participation, and removal of Corps commanders from political responsibilities. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 8D 6/67-1/69, Mission Council Action Memos) Bunker also advised against applying too much pressure on the GVN leaders. In telegram CAS 254 from Saigon, September 9, he wrote: "I believe that they thoroughly understand this point, and, if anything, it has been made too often and too openly to them. There is only so much that the traffic will bear at any one time. I believe that further explicit pressure may be counterproductive and that we must leave to them the exact way in which they bring this about." (Ibid., White House Cables-Back Channels-Incoming, Outgoing)

⁵ In this telegram, Bunker reported that Thieu displayed "a slight sensitivity" when he read the part of the President's letter relating to the creation of a broadly-based government. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 15-1 VIET S)

stantial portions of your message have been prominently displayed in the Saigon press. Thieu himself has no reservations about the desirability of a broadly-based government with predominantly civilian representation, and is himself deeply involved in negotiations with his recent opponents to achieve this objective. He is fully aware of the complicated personal and political problems involved. In addition to the offer made to Huong, Thieu also said that he planned to sound out Phan Khac Suu on a post in the government though he felt this would have to be pretty much in an honorary capacity because of Suu's physical and mental condition. In addition, Thieu told me he personally tried to find, among supporters of Huong, Suu, and Ha Thuc Ky, representatives whom they might suggest for government posts and who could be included.⁶

[Here follows discussion of additional political issues, the military effort, and pacification.]

Bunker

⁶ As reported in telegram 5821, September 13, the previous evening Bunker discussed potential Cabinet members with Thieu. In addition, he broached the idea of an overture by the GVN to Hanoi. (Ibid.) In telegram CAS 358 from Saigon, September 14, Bunker cautioned that any such initiative had to be taken in close cooperation with the U.S. Government. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, White House Cables–Back Channels–Incoming, Outgoing)

321. Telegram From the Embassy in France to the Department of State¹

Paris, September 13, 1967, 1053Z.

3243. From Kissinger. I have some concern over the message I have been asked to transmit to Bo.² As I understand it, the purpose of the present effort is to determine whether Hanoi would be willing to enter productive negotiations if we stop bombing and other military activities against the North. In my view, the exchange with Hanoi should therefore, focus on this essential proposition. I am afraid that the last

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA. Top Secret; Flash; Nodis/Pennsylvania. Received at 7:49 a.m.

² See Document 318.

three sentences of the proposed message will enable Hanoi to confuse the issue by introducing a whole list of irrelevant considerations such as the Hanoi view of the elections, the legitimacy of the Saigon government, the fact that Hanoi is not responsible for the actions of the people of SVN, its rejection of the term "terrorist" and so on.

I would therefore propose that the third paragraph of the message be replaced by the following:

"As a demonstration of its good faith and in order to create the best atmosphere for the consideration of its proposal the United States voluntarily undertook not to bomb Hanoi from August 25 onward—the day on which its proposal was submitted to Hanoi. This restraint has been maintained even though activities by opposing forces in the South have in fact been stepped up since August 25.

The August 25 proposal of the United States Government remains open."

I could then make the points of the original version in my oral commentary.³

Bohlen

³ According to a notation on a memorandum from Rostow transmitting a copy of this telegram to the President, September 13, 10 a.m., Johnson approved Kissinger's recommended change. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Pennsylvania (continued))

322. Telegram From the Embassy in France to the Department of State¹

Paris, September 13, 1967, 1100Z.

3242. From Kissinger. I saw M at breakfast and told him that I had a reply to Hanoi's message which I had been instructed to deliver to Bo personally. M replied that every time I brought a message we bombed the center of a North Vietnamese city.² If this happened one more time he was no longer prepared to serve as channel. I told him

¹Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA. Secret; Flash; Nodis/Pennsylvania. Received at 7:57 a.m.

²Campha and Haiphong were bombed during the previous 2 days.

that the target decisions were based on technical judgments and meteorological conditions. The only useful discussion seemed to me to be an end of all bombing which we have offered rather than a debate over individual tactical targets.

Nevertheless in view of M's state of mind and in order to give the greatest degree of formality to the request for an interview with Bo I told M that I would give him a personal message from me to Bo. This seemed to me to have the added advantage that Bo could transmit a specific request to Hanoi rather than his interpretation of M's interpretation of my words. The text of the message in English and French was given to M in a sealed envelope on plain paper and unsigned.

In English and in French the text of the message is as follows:

English text:

I have a reply from the United States Government to the Hanoi message which was received on Monday.³ I have also been given a commentary on this message. Because of the importance of the United States reply and because the commentary refers to other discussions with Hanoi which we have promised not to reveal I have been instructed to deliver it personally. I am available for a meeting at any time and at any place which is convenient to Mr. Mai Van Bo.

[Here follows the French text of the same message.]

M called Bo immediately and received an appointment within half an hour. I shall see him immediately afterwards around 1200 Paris time.

I did not tell M of our "fall-back" position that he could deliver the message if Bo refuses to see me in order to create a maximum incentive for a personal meeting. If Bo refuses to see me, I shall tell M that I must ask for new instructions. After a suitable interval I shall then give him the message to transmit to Bo.

To prepare for this contingency I have asked M to request A to return to Paris. His political savvy will be helpful if recourse to the French channel becomes necessary.

Bohlen

³ September 11.

323. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in France¹

Washington, September 13, 1967, 2240Z.

36928. For Kissinger.

1. As you meet tomorrow with M and possibly with A as well, you may use following information to meet any charges that by hitting in the center of Haiphong we are in any way significantly escalating or acting so that Hanoi is entitled to feel we are hurting the chances of communication.

2. Attacks on 11 September in Haiphong area were conducted, and we believe accurately, against Haiphong bridge and railroad yard two miles north-northwest of the city itself, on railroad and highway bridge one mile west of the center of town, and a major warehouse 1.5 miles north of the town and across the river. All of these targets are away from the major port area and any built-up area that can properly be called the center of town. The closest target to the center, the railroad and highway bridge, is virtually in the same location as the major power plant and adjacent cement plant that have been hit in the past, power plant having been hit a total of three times, most recently on June 26.

3. Other targets equally close to anything that can be called the center of town have been hit in May and earlier in September on one occasion. All of these targets are so located that in our best judgment the attacks could be conducted accurately and with minimum risk of any significant civilian casualties. All are, in terms of type, the same kind of communication facilities and major supply installations (the warehouse) that we have hit on other occasions and in other areas.

4. Thus, the Haiphong attacks conducted on September 11 were not in our judgment a significant escalation either in terms of location or type of target. We have every reason to believe that the attacks were conducted accurately. Whether there were civilian casualties in Haiphong is a matter we do not now know, but we do know that an unrelated incident near Haiphong took place about September 8 or 9. This was that a North Vietnamese SAM site located in the eastern quarter of Haiphong city itself fired two SAM missiles in the direction of American aircraft orbiting off the coast several miles away. One of these SAM missiles apparently misfired and landed and exploded near an Italian ship that was lying off-shore waiting to unload. A second ap-

¹Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA. Top Secret; Immediate; Nodis/Pennsylvania. Drafted and approved by Bundy and cleared by Read.

parently exploded in the air over a similar ship. However, this was not in connection with any attacks by us in the Haiphong area on these days, although the result may well have been to build up the picture of attack on Haiphong.

5. If M and A should raise the question of attacks on the Cam Pha port, to the northeast of Haiphong, it is true that this port was attacked this week, as it had been on June 2, 1967. However, as has been announced here (but doubtless not by Paris press) the attacks were very carefully directed against supply installations and care was taken that there were no ships in harbor. (This is of course less a North Vietnam problem than the problem of foreign shipping.) In any case, the attack on Cam Pha was not a new act.

6. Since dictating the above, we have your 3288 in which Bo's complaint seems to be that we hit "within one kilometer" of the center of Haiphong.² This doubtless relates to the railroad and highway bridge, which as noted above is about one mile west of the center of town. However, the point here is that it is adjacent to the power plant and also the Haiphong cement plant, both of which have been hit in the past. All three are clearly marked and separated from the center of town by the small stream which the railroad and highway bridge crosses. With the accuracy that we now believe is achieved by our pilots, attacks on these are not attacks on populated areas, and we believe the risk of significant civilian casualties has been minimal. FYI: To the best of our knowledge Hanoi has made no specific charge that we hit populated areas in the September 11 attacks. However, you should not bring this up lest it suggest to them that they should make such a charge. End FYI.

7. In light of Bo's stress on closeness to the center of town, you may wish to confine your rebuttal to the railroad and highway bridge and its proximity to other targets hit in the past, simply noting that any other targets in the Haiphong area that were hit on the 11th were at substantially greater distances and more clearly away from populated areas.

Rusk

² See footnote 2, Document 324.

324. Telegram From the Embassy in France to the Department of State¹

Paris, September 13, 1967, 15052.

3257. From Kissinger. Bo saw M on short notice today at 12 noon. I met with M for ten minutes after this interview which lasted thirty-five minutes. Since M had to go to meeting which will occupy him all afternoon he could give me only the first of the conversation. In effect, Bo said that as long as the threat to bomb Hanoi was maintained he could not meet with me. However, he would be glad to receive any communication from me through M orally or on the basis of this morning, that is a message on a plain sheet of paper in a sealed envelope. M had the impression that Bo might prefer the latter method.

Accordingly when I see M at 1700 today I propose to ask him to see Bo first thing in the morning.² I shall tell him that I have asked for instructions about delivering the message through M. In the meantime he should give Bo the following statement (drawn from my instructions) in English and French together with a renewed request for a personal meeting:

"Hanoi's attitude with respect to the kind of restraint we have employed in this channel is baffling. If we bomb near Hanoi we are accused of bringing pressure. If we voluntarily and without any suggestion from Hanoi impose a restraint on our actions and keep this up without time limit we are accused of an ultimatum. In fact, the American proposal contained neither threats nor conditions and should not be rejected on these grounds."

I shall tell M that the sentences are drawn from my instructions. If Bo refuses to see me, I shall have M pass on message early tomorrow afternoon. If you disapprove of this procedure, I shall simply ask M to deliver the message tomorrow morning. Please advise as soon as possible.

Bohlen

¹Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA. Top Secret; Flash; Nodis/Pennsylvania. Received at 12:31 p.m.

²Kissinger reported on the afternoon meeting more fully in telegram 3288 from Paris, September 13. (Ibid.) In telegram 3329 from Paris, September 14, Kissinger reported that as a result of Bo's suggestion for written communications, he would ask Aubrac and Marcovich to make separate copies of his unsigned messages, both private and official, and translate them into French. Bo could use the same method. (Ibid.)

325. Telegram From the Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs (Carver) to Director of Central Intelligence Helms¹

Saigon, September 13, 1967, 1225Z.

CAS 1983. For Knight only from Funaro.² Ref: A. Saigon 1925 [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*], B. Saigon 1926 [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*].³

1. Circle now squared, chiefly as result of Westmoreland session (and perhaps Komer dinner). We now have agreed set of figures Westmoreland endorses. Mission seems on verge of successful conclusion, though final t's to be crossed tomorrow.

2. Komer dinner was relaxed, frank, cordial and (most usefully) private. We reviewed whole estimate exercise. I gave blunt outline of weaknesses in MACV case, of peculiar MACV behavior, and of fact that agreement impossible unless climate improved enough to permit serious discussion. Komer did not agree with our substantive position and repeated some caustic remarks about the estimate but he did listen.

3. On morning 13 September, General Davidson advised me Westmoreland meeting would do nothing but formalize our impasse, since Westmoreland would never accept our position. When meeting convened (with Abrams, Komer, General Sidle (PIO)⁴ and INR reps attending), Davidson gave rather biased account of proceedings, noting our impasse on figures, saying he thought our paragraph written to avoid quantifying irregulars (last para Ref A) unacceptable and outlining his draft cable by which General Westmoreland could advise General Wheeler of our inability to agree. Komer weighed in with replay of his thesis, recommending acceptance MACV position but acknowledging logic in some of Washington views. I then reviewed history and context whole estimate, the Saigon discussions, and the rationale behind each of the joint Washington representative figures, and (as tactfully as possible) the way the procedure through which national estimates produced reduced our negotiating latitude. I also took up "quantification paragraph," indicating that Davidson had quoted out of context and showing why we thought it met both Washington

¹Source: Central Intelligence Agency, DCI (Helms) Files, Job 80–R1720R, GAC Files. Secret; Immediate Director. The telegram was an attachment to a memorandum from Carver to Helms, November 28, 1975.

² Knight was Helms' pseudonym; Funaro was Carver's.

³ See Document 314 and footnote 8 thereto. A typed note added at a later time notes that these two cables were "messages to Knight concerning the VC strength estimates."

⁴ Brigadier General Winant Sidle, Chief of MACV's Public Information Office.

and MACV needs. I concluded with general remarks tracing history of U.S. military estimates on Vietnam since 1956, noting that consistent record of underestimation plus recent (i.e. McChristian)⁵ methodology which required constant retroactive juggling had contributed mightily to our credibility problems, that we needed baseline which would not have to be adjusted again, and that when in doubt we well advised, from all angles, to err on side of caution rather than optimism.

4. Westmoreland most cordial and receptive. Said he agreed with most of my observations and could see the clear logic behind both sets of figures, which were really not that far apart. He also saw the rationale behind our "irregular quantification" paragraph and had no problems with it, though he would want to take a final look at it in writing. He asked if I would convene both the Washington and MACV analysts to review the evidence once again and see if we could resolve our differences.

5. When the analyst meeting was convened (with Davidson represented by his deputy) I took Westmoreland at his word, usurped the chair, and announced that all constraints on totals were off and we could settle down to serious discussion of evidence and issues. During about four hours of brisk discussion we hammered out the following set of agreed figures, which General Westmoreland has already endorsed: main and local force 119,000, admin services 35,000–40,000, guerrillas 70,000–90,000 for military total spread of 224,000–249,000. Political 75,000 to 85,000.

6. On the whole, I think we can live quite comfortably with the above figures (which the DIA team and INR rep endorse). We have no dispute on the main and local force 119,000 figure. The text of the operative sentence in our admin service paragraph (see Ref A) now reads "In light of these considerations, we estimate that there are now at least 35,000–40,000 administrative service personnel who are performing essential administrative support functions full time." The rest of the paragraph is unchanged. We gave a little cosmetically but I think this preserves the essence of the judgment in the 14.3 draft.⁶

7. There has been some adjustment on guerrillas, but the new figure (70,000–90,000) appreciably lifts MACV's previous total (65,000) and has the same median (80,000) as the spread in the 14.3 draft.

8. We gave a little on the political figure, partly to keep MACV on the reservation with respect to the guerrillas, partly because MACV did have a case on double counting (some bodies in both military and political figures, though this was not the reason MACV whacked the

⁵ Major General Joseph A. McChristian was the former MACV Chief of Intelligence.

⁶ See footnote 8, Document 314.

figure yesterday), and primarily because the discussion and evidence convinced me that this is not a very good figure anyway. Our present definitions are not adequate or sufficiently precise, we include much more than the real “leadership” and exclude many (e.g. security elements) of whom formal cognizance should be taken.

9. On above, with endorsement Messrs. Hyland and Moor⁷ and DIA reps and concurrence General Davidson, I am initiating major study to refine our political categories and hence improve our political holdings. To this end, Mr. Adams will remain Saigon to go over whole subject in detail with MACV analysts and our ICEX officers. Further work will then be carried on in Washington under Mr. Moor’s aegis.

10. Our agreed figures and irregular quantification paragraph being given General Westmoreland in writing tomorrow. Once he adds signature to already expressed verbal approval our mission successfully completed. I have 1500 hours appointment with Ambassador Bunker on 14 September and shall give him full report.⁸

11. General Westmoreland has requested I work with General Davidson and General Sidle to prepare scenario for press backgrounder. I have accepted your concurrence. Please advise.⁹

12. On returns, early reservations out of Saigon almost impossible obtain. Subject your approval (please advise immediate) I have authorized Messrs. Moor and Hyland use their present 14 September PanAm reservations. I have reservation for 16 September but will not leave until you concur. Request our wives be advised of these travel arrangements.¹⁰

⁷ Dean Moor, an expert on North Vietnam in the CIA’s Office of Current Intelligence.

⁸ In his meeting with Bunker, Carver reported on the agreement with MACV on the figures but left out “details now better forgotten” pertaining to the negotiations that led to the coordinated estimate. (Telegram CAS 2043 from Saigon, September 14; Central Intelligence Agency, DCI (Helms) Files, Job 80–R1720R, GAC Files)

⁹ In telegram CAS 1988 from Saigon, September 13, Helms responded: “Have no objection to your undertaking what General Westmoreland asks, but do not feel that such press backgrounds should be related in any way to NIE process. Will make determination only after you return here whether or not estimate will be issued.” (Ibid.)

¹⁰ The delegation left Saigon as scheduled.

326. Telegram From the Embassy in France to the Department of State¹

Paris, September 15, 1967, 1205Z.

3414. From Kissinger. I saw M this morning.² He told me that A would not arrive until 0900 tomorrow morning (Saturday). He called Bo in my presence and asked for an appointment at 1200 tomorrow. Bo agreed and asked whether I had heard from Washington. As instructed by me M said that I was still waiting authority to transmit the message through A & M. He asked Bo whether he had any comments on the paper handed him yesterday. Bo replied that he would make his comments tomorrow. (*Note:* This was said even though he did not know whether A & M would have U.S. response to hand to him.)

M proposed to tell Bo (if A agrees) that should I leave Paris without having received a communication from Bo, A & M can only conclude that Hanoi does not want negotiations. I shall meet A's airplane together with M and spend the time before the Bo interview with both of them.

Recommendation: (1) I wonder whether it might help to add the words "without time limit" to the next to the last sentence of the message which would then read: "This restraint has been maintained without time limit even though activities by opposing forces in the South have, in fact been stepped up since August 25." The sentence would then be consistent with the phraseology of the message handed Bo yesterday (see Paris 3257).³

Bohlen

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA. Top Secret; Flash; Nodis/Pennsylvania. Received at 8:56 a.m.

² In telegram 3383 from Paris, September 14, Kissinger reported on Marcovich's meeting with Bo that day at noon. Marcovich told Bo that Kissinger had requested guidance from Washington, a ploy that Kissinger described as necessary "to gain time and to see whether delay might not produce a personal meeting." Marcovich also handed Bo the message relating to procedures for exchanges. (*Ibid.*) In reporting this meeting to the President, Rostow wrote in a September 14 covering memorandum transmitting both cables: "I think Henry is playing it quite correctly." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Pennsylvania (continued)) The notation "L" on the covering note indicates that the President saw the cables.

³ Document 324.

327. Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in France¹

Washington, September 15, 1967, 1039Z.

38057. For Kissinger. Ref: Paris 3414.² We agree to the recommendation contained in the last paragraph of reftel.

We are concerned, however, about M and A expressing to Bo the view that if you leave Paris without having received a communication from Bo they would conclude that Hanoi does not want the negotiations. Even though they underscore the fact that it is their personal view, Bo might read it as having the flavor of an ultimatum and having come to him at the direction of the USG in spite of the disclaimer by M and A.

At the same time, we are equally concerned that there be no misimpression on the part of M and A or Bo that the USG has given a renewed assurance against bombing in the vicinity of Hanoi. We do not want them to think that they have such an automatic assurance valid indefinitely into the future. The mere fact that there has been no bombing in that area since the 24th of August must not be interpreted by them to constitute any such assurance. If you think that M and A are under any wrong impression in this regard or that they may have imparted to Bo any such view, we think it important that this point also be clarified in the discussions scheduled for September 16.³

Rusk

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA. Top Secret; Immediate; Nodis/Pennsylvania. Drafted by Read, cleared by Walt Rostow and Bundy, and approved by Rusk and Katzenbach.

² Document 326.

³ Kissinger's response in telegram 3486 from Paris, September 16, reads: "I will make certain that M and A do not relate need for an answer to my presence in Paris. With A's return, conversations are likely to be more business-like and less emotional. M and A have been told nothing about bombing in the vicinity of Hanoi, except that the current restraint has no fixed time limit. The only other reference to the bombing of Hanoi was in the brief note handed to Bo on Thursday which M did not see. However, M and A believe that a new bombing of Hanoi would end their usefulness as a channel and they will then report to the Elysée. Though they have promised to let me vet their report, it makes it advisable not to let them see more than absolutely necessary. In my conversation with M and A tomorrow morning prior to the Bo interview, I shall take care to leave no ambiguity about the concerns expressed in reftel." (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA)

328. Memorandum for Record¹

MACJOO

Saigon, September 15, 1967.

SUBJECT

Meeting with Prime Minister Ky, 1130–1230 hours, 15 September, at VNAF Headquarters

1. Ky opened the conversation by saying he had just visited Bien Hoa and had had a chance to fly in the Army's new Huey Cobra helicopter. I expressed delight that he had flown in this new aircraft. I then told him about the early arrival of Gun Ship II, a C-130 aircraft equipped with multiple guns and illumination and sensor devices. We will be in touch with him to arrange for an inspection of this new ship.

2. After congratulating Ky on the way the elections were planned and carried out to include the security arrangements by the Vietnamese Armed Forces, we proceeded to discuss general events. The following pertinent comments were made by Ky:

a. There is little prospect that the Constituent Assembly will invalidate the elections. Also, we should not worry about students, Buddhists, or other demonstrations which he feels have no momentum.

b. A number of unhappy factions had approached him and suggested that he upset the situation, but he had given them no satisfaction. As of today two monks had approached him at Bien Hoa and asked him to go on the public record in behalf of the Buddhists.

c. General Thieu has not informed him as to what his responsibilities will be. Thieu is a good man but he is surrounded by Dai Viet advisors who are giving him bad advice. Dai Viets are not strong because they are divided into three factions.

d. The reports of friction between Thieu and Ky have been encouraged by Thieu's entourage. (In connection with the report of friction between Thieu and Ky, I told him about my experience in Manila and the curiosity of senior Filipinos as to the truth of this report.) Ky is standing by to cooperate fully with Thieu but so far Thieu has made no move. Ky has made it clear to Thieu that he is willing to cooperate with him.

e. The last meeting of the generals resulted in retiring or discharging a number of officers on whom they had evidence of malpractices. Regrettably, Thieu would not agree to the discharge of

¹ Source: U.S. Army Military History Institute, Papers of William C. Westmoreland, History File 22, Sept 10–30, 1967. Confidential.

Quang² which resulted in unhappiness by a number of the generals, particularly Thang. Thang may leave the Army and government service.³ (I discussed the importance of Thang in revitalizing the territorial forces and urged that Ky do all possible to persuade Thang to accept the position that had been planned for him as principal assistant to Vien. Ky agreed that this was important, but he was skeptical that Thang would change his mind.)

f. Ky had noted some discouragement among the generals since their last meeting because Thieu gave the impression that he would not provide the leadership required for a dynamic national program. Lam was singled out as an officer who was normally optimistic but who expressed to Ky discouragement.

g. Ky asked me if I still thought Chinh⁴ should be relieved from the 25th Division and I stated emphatically that I did. This brought about the discussion of the importance of leadership and Ky fully agreed with me that all the Vietnamese soldiers needed was good leaders for they were excellent soldiers. He will do all possible to put the strongest leaders in key positions.

3. Ky let his hair down and related in some detail Thieu's reticence to deal with him and take him into his confidence. He mentioned Thieu's action to withdraw him from the TV Face the Nation program and expressed an appreciation of the importance of an appearance of unity for the benefit of U.S. and world opinion. Also he mentioned the long distance call received from New Mexico where an intoxicated American urged that he initiate a coup to which he replied that the days of coups in Vietnam were long past.

4. As we concluded our visit, I emphasized that he and Thieu complemented each other very well and it was important that they work as a team. Ky again repeated that he was eager but the initiative had to be Thieu's. I told Ky confidentially that I had seen Thieu on Wednesday⁵ and had made such a suggestion. Matters could slip from their

² Lieutenant General Dang Van Quang, Thieu's military assistant.

³ According to the record of a meeting between Thang and Komer the same day, Thang contemplated leaving the government because the military was not keen on his assumption of a top position in the JGS, his advocacy of a civilian democracy which had made him become regarded as a "revolutionary," and his belief that the new regime only wanted to place him in a "figurehead role" without any real power. Thang doubted that the government would seriously address the issues of corruption and inefficiency. (Center for Military History, DepCORDS/MACV Files, RD Liaison: 1967)

⁴ Brigadier General Pham Truong Chinh.

⁵ September 13. No other record of this meeting has been found.

grasp after they had accomplished so much during the last two years working as a team. Such a development would be a national tragedy.⁶

W. C. Westmoreland
General, United States Army
Commanding

⁶ During his meeting with Cao Van Vien on September 16, Westmoreland reported that he "had found no evidence of antagonism" between Thieu and Ky. He also stressed to Vien the importance for the top Generals to remove themselves from politics. Vien agreed, adding that "the military would not dictate to Thieu or Ky or get involved in political matters." (Memorandum for the Record, September 16; U.S. Army Military History Institute, Papers of William C. Westmoreland, History File 22, Sept 10–30, 1967)

329. Telegram From the Embassy in France to the Department of State¹

Paris, September 16, 1967, 1605Z.

3501. From Kissinger. I lunched with A and M within minutes of their interview with Bo which lasted for over an hour. The following report is their account based on extensive notes taken by A. I read my own notes back to them to check their accuracy. A did most of the talking at lunch and also at the interview with Bo. Quotations reflect the best recollection of A and M based on notes made during the interview.

Bo greeted A and M very affably and offered them whiskey. A, who is suffering from a sciatic condition which delayed his arrival from Rome, declined on doctor's orders. Bo said that he did not like whiskey but, looking at M, that whiskey did help to reduce anxieties. He then offered tea and pastry. He said that he had been especially charged by President Ho to inquire into the health of A's family, especially his daughter.

A then handed him the U.S. message in a sealed envelope. Bo asked whether he knew its content. A replied that all he knew was that I had described it as "conciliatory." (He used the English word and Bo made him write it down.) Bo did not open the envelope in A & M's presence.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA. Top Secret; Flash; Nodis/Pennsylvania. Received at 3:27 p.m.

A next showed Bo the stories in *Le Monde* of yesterday and of *Le Figaro* this morning and inquired about their significance. Bo, who had obviously been expecting the question replied that the three to four week interval between the end of bombing and the beginning of negotiations was an invention of journalists. Pham Van Dong's statement had given no ground for the time period mentioned in the newspapers.²

A then turned the conversation to the continued validity of the A–M channel. He said he did not mind acting as a mailman but there was no sense in continuing if it led nowhere or embarrassed either party. "We are, in my judgment, at the end of our tether (*au bout de notre rouleau*). We have established contact and we should withdraw." Bo replied: "My dear friends, you are not in my judgment at the end of your tether. You have been received as friends. We trust you and you trust Kissinger. What you have been doing is useful. If we think what you are doing is not useful, we shall tell you. When you asked for a visa concurrent with the bombardment of Hanoi, we refused. To let you come would have discredited us and ultimately you. But you see you have produced results. There was a message to us from the United States Government which we accepted. We replied, to be sure, negatively. This week we have had two brief communications and today a formal message. So you are being useful."

M then said that he thought the time had come for Bo to see me. Bo asked many questions about my plans for next week. (*Note: For Washington's information, I have cancelled my visit to Bonn but am committed to a speech in Hanover on Saturday.*³ I shall stay here until about noon Sept 22.) M said that one way of arranging a meeting would be to have coffee together in somebody's house. Bo replied: "Let me think about how best to arrange a meeting and I will let you know. I will call you as I called you last week."

M then returned to his theme of reporting to the Elysée if the present effort failed but offering to check with Bo first. Turning to A Bo said: "Our friend M is very impatient. First he wanted to report to Pugwash, now to the Elysée. I can tell you now that I shall never tell you not to report to the Elysée but also I shall never tell you to report there. Your channel is not at the end of its usefulness. I see no need to bring anyone else in. Complicated matters take some time to mature and be-

² These reports quoted North Vietnamese sources who stated that talks would begin within 4 weeks after the cessation of bombing by the United States. These sources also interpreted Dong's statement of August 30, in which the Premier called for a halt as a prerequisite for negotiations, not as imposing conditions for a cease-fire. See *The New York Times*, September 15.

³ September 23.

come more complicated if too many people intervene.” (*Note: A commented that Hanoi and Washington obviously saw procedural matters in the same light.*)

M returned to the interview of A and M with Pham Van Dong. He asked whether Dzu (the runner-up in the Presidential campaign in SVN) would be acceptable to the NLF in the more broadly based government Pham Van Dong had mentioned in July. Bo said that he had gone to university in Paris with Dzu and knew him. Dzu was a heel (*salaud*), who all his life had been involved in currency manipulations. He could not be counted on. There were, however, many reasonable people in the South, including high-ranking military officers. When A asked about Thieu Bo replied: “I do not understand a man who gets himself elected on the basis of inviting foreigners to bomb his compatriots.” A was struck by the relative mildness of his comment.

In conclusion Bo asked A and M whether I had said anything about the political situation in the U.S. Because of Paris 3341⁴ I had thought that this issue might come up. Following my recommendations, A and M said that the main lines of American foreign policy would not change no matter who won in 1968—unless it was Reagan⁵ in which case there would be a greater possibility of escalation than of peace overtures.

Bo seemed surprised at this news.

A did not raise the nuance he mentioned about the text of Hanoi message of Sept 11 (see Paris 3492)⁶ because he was afraid it might involve an implication that the Vietnamese lacked adequate French.

At the end of the meeting Bo returned M’s handwritten notes of Thursday (see Paris 3383).⁷ M apologized for the inadequate French and poor handwriting. Bo said that the notes had been very useful. M offered to type them up. Bo, following the rules of the “game” said that this was not necessary. He had studied them sufficiently.

⁴ Dated September 14. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA)

⁵ Governor Ronald Reagan was a leading figure in the conservative wing of the Republican Party.

⁶ For the message of September 11 from Bo, see footnote 2, Document 315. In telegram 3492 from Paris, September 16, Kissinger noted that Aubrac believed an ambiguity existed in the message’s use of the French phrase translated into English as “cannot impose conditions.” Aubrac suggested that “Hanoi may wish to leave room for certain conditions.” Kissinger concurred in Aubrac’s desire to explore the meaning of the phrase with Bo. Kissinger also reported that he met with Aubrac and Marcovich the morning of September 16. He advised them not to tie the continuation of the channel to Kissinger’s presence in Paris and to maintain the fullest secrecy. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA)

⁷ See footnote 2, Document 326.

Conclusions: (1) A who on the way from the airport had been very pessimistic about the continued usefulness of the A–M channel has changed his view. Where this morning he thought that the basic problem was that Hanoi either could not or would not talk he now believes that it is tortuously groping its way to a dialogue with the U.S.

(2) A believes that Bo already has authority to see me but wants to wait until closer to my departure. He wants, in A's judgment, to avoid an impression of overeagerness. He did not once mention the need of referring the request to Hanoi.

(3) A & M consider it significant that the bombing of Hanoi or Haiphong was not mentioned by Bo (except peripherally to explain the refusal of a visa) even though the last U.S. communication referred to them (see Paris 3383 & 3415).⁸

(4) A was eager to return to Rome. I asked him to stay over the week end. However, he plans to leave Monday morning⁹ and return Wednesday.

(5) My recommendation is that we sit tight. If we have not heard from Bo by Wednesday afternoon, A can call and request an appointment for himself and M for Thursday. This meeting could discuss how to use the A–M channel after I leave Paris. I would be grateful for guidance on this point as on any additional points to discuss with Bo if the meeting takes place.

Bohlen

⁸ Telegram 3415 from Paris, September 15, transmitted the French text of Bo's message of September 14 to the Department. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA)

⁹ September 18.

330. Memorandum of Conversation Between the Ambassador at Large (Harriman) and Secretary of Defense McNamara¹

Washington, September 19, 1967.

In accordance with the understanding I had with Bob McNamara in July that we should compare notes on the possibility of encourag-

¹ Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Harriman Papers, Special Files, Public Service, Subject Files, McNamara, Robert S. Top Secret; Nodis; For Personal Files Only.

ing the Saigon Government to get in touch with the NLF after the election, I called on him today.

He agreed that we must do everything possible to get negotiations going before our election in 68. He said that Vietnam would “tear the country apart” in the election campaign. He spoke of his being picketed when he made his speech in San Francisco and the manner in which he avoided them by having a dummy car with police in the front, whereas he ducked out the back door. Finding that they had been duped, the pickets threw bottles and rocks at the car and the police.

He strongly supports carrying through on the Kissinger–A,M lead. He said he thought Kissinger had handled it superbly. He confirmed that he would oppose any bombing in the environs of Hanoi as long as these discussions were going on with Bo. He commented that this was the first time that we had gotten a real reply. I mentioned the possibility of the Norwegian Ambassador’s visit.² His only comment was that it would be difficult to have two leads going at the same time. Believing we could cross that bridge if we had to, I simply said that I thought the Norwegian could be properly briefed as he was an experienced diplomat.

He agreed that we should talk again after the new Saigon Government was organized with the new Prime Minister and the other civilian Ministers.

We agreed that Bunker should be urged to encourage any possible contacts between the new government and individual NLF members or the group as a whole. When I said that the Saigon Government should also be encouraged to give consideration to a possible settlement which they themselves could work out, he replied, “There is only one answer: representatives of the VC must be admitted to the coalition government and the VC recognized as a legitimate party.” He agreed when I said they must abandon all terrorism, and he added, “Perhaps under a new name.”

He said that he knew Dean Rusk expected a VC surrender but thought that was impossible. I told him that I agreed that Rusk was unrealistic and would have to be persuaded.

For my part, I felt we should try to do somewhat better than the acceptance of the VC as a political party because of the danger of its

² Algard had not yet responded to Loan’s August 19 invitation to visit Hanoi as an intermediary. According to telegram 36328 to Oslo, September 13, the Department withheld instructions to the Norwegians while the Pennsylvania contact continued in order to avoid “duplication of channels.” The North Vietnamese also delayed the resumption of this channel presumably for the same reason by not issuing a travel permit to Algard. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/OHIO)

terrorist activity and its ruthless organization. I showed him the news report from Moscow quoting Brezhnev as supporting “the struggle for building up an *independent*, democratic, peaceful and neutral South Vietnam.” I also pointed out that the Hanoi Ambassador in Peking had told the Norwegian Ambassador that South Vietnam could have a non-communist government.³ This sort of thing led me to hope that if negotiations really started between the Saigon Government and the NLF, a better deal could be worked out than the one he suggested. But I firmly believed that the Secretary was 100% wrong in thinking the NLF would surrender if the North Vietnamese quit.

I asked him about the mood of the President. He said he wasn’t quite sure. He was surrounded by Rostow, Clark Clifford and others who seemed to think that victory was around the corner, to which he did not agree. He thought perhaps the President wanted to give the hawks, such as Senators Russell and Dirksen, as much of what they were asking as he could, and then he would be in a better position to follow a peace course if it hadn’t worked.

I said I thought we ought to aim for the Tet period, concentrating all of our actions to achieve the commencement of negotiations. When I said that the bombing must be in tune, he interrupted by saying, “Our record is appalling.” I commented that I did not believe any fruitful negotiations could have been started before now, but I agreed that every time we had started negotiations the bombing interrupted them, and we never knew where they would have led. In any event, our bombing had given the other side an excuse for dropping out.

In reply to my question, he said he was firmly opposed to mining the Haiphong harbor, and that was why he had made his statement so firm. He felt all hands agreed to that at the present time. I told him that I had not involved myself in the bombing policy and was holding my powder dry unless that subject came up, in which case I would have to oppose strongly. He said, “That is my position.”

We agreed that the Soviet Union would have to play an important role in any settlement, and the Soviet Union would have to underwrite economic reconstruction of North Vietnam. Without this, Hanoi could never act, as China would probably continue to oppose. He suggested that we might propose to the Russians that we pay a share. I told him that I understood Dean Rusk was going to raise the subject of Vietnam with Gromyko to see whether we could make any progress towards getting the Soviets to take more vigorous action. He agreed when I said

³ According to telegram 972 from Oslo, August 21, Loan made this remark at the August 19 meeting. (Ibid.)

that I thought we ought to show the Soviets our recent A & M proposal.⁴

We agreed to have another talk after the government was formed and review the situation in the light of developments.

W. Averell Harriman⁵

⁴ Harriman made this recommendation in a memorandum sent to Rusk the next day. (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Harriman Papers, Special Files, Public Service, Subject Files, Vietnam, General, July–December 1967)

⁵ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

331. Notes of Meeting¹

Washington, September 19, 1967, 5:55–6:35 p.m.

NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PRESIDENT
WITH
SECRETARY McNAMARA
UNDER SECRETARY KATZENBACH
WALT ROSTOW
GEORGE CHRISTIAN

[Here follows discussion of matters unrelated to Vietnam.]

The proposed U.N. speech by Ambassador Goldberg was discussed.² The President said he hoped that the Ambassador would stick with what already has been said and Ho's position as expressed in his released letter.³ The President said nothing good could come from a U.N. speech at this time.

The President read a tally sheet on votes in committee compiled by Senator Mansfield related to the Asian Development Bank. Senator Mansfield said Senator Fulbright has asked the Department of State to

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Tom Johnson's Note of Meetings. Top Secret. The meeting was held in the Cabinet Room.

² Goldberg's speech, delivered before the UN General Assembly on September 21, opened discussion on Vietnam. Goldberg stated the various ways through which peace could arise and listed the terms of what the United States considered an "honorable settlement." For text of the speech, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1967*, pp. 992–995.

³ See Document 82.

handle the bill. The President said Eugene Black should talk with Senator Fulbright about his handling the legislation.

Secretary Katzenbach raised the question of a delegation to the South Vietnamese inauguration. The President asked the date. Secretary Katzenbach said it was in late October. The President said we had plenty of time to consider the delegation. Secretary Katzenbach suggested that the Vice President head the delegation.

Bombing policy was discussed. Secretary McNamara said there was no need for new targets to be approved this week since the JCS has 49 targets already authorized but not struck.

The Secretary said improved jamming techniques have prevented loss of any aircraft using the new Air Force devices.

The Secretary said it may be necessary to begin escorting reconnaissance aircraft since one was shot down by enemy jets this week. They previously had been flying without escort.

[Here follows discussion of matters unrelated to Vietnam.]

The President reiterated that he wanted an urgent priority given to talking with Senators and Congressmen on the Asian Development Bank message.

Secretary McNamara said it will be 3–6 months before we get the barrier working along the DMZ. He said he would like to have it operational by November.⁴

⁴ In a September 20 memorandum to McNamara, Warnke noted Westmoreland's decision (which had Sharp's concurrence) to postpone construction of the barrier until the rainy season ended in early 1968 due to concern over estimated casualties that would occur. Since Warnke could foresee high casualties occurring even if there was a postponement until after the monsoons, he suggested the initiation of a study to determine whether the barrier could be built 10–15 kilometers south of where it was currently planned, a move that would both limit casualties and give U.S. forces "maneuver room." (Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OSD Files: FRC 72 A 2467, VIET BARRIER 385 (Aug–Sep) 1967) A notation on the memorandum by McNamara dated September 22 reads: "Paul, as we discussed this morning, I am disinclined to start such a study now."

332. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, September 20, 1967, 1220Z.

6460. For the President from Bunker.

A. General.

1. The past week has been characterized by gradual relaxation of some of the post election tensions. The Central Election Council has been receiving the official tabulation of the voters for the Senate slates and examining complaints of irregularities in the recent elections. Little has been heard from the protesting Presidential candidates. Truong Dinh Dzu, the runner up, seems to have subsided, at least temporarily, achieving prominence chiefly through his sentencing to six months imprisonment and a substantial fine on two bad check charges and holding an unauthorized bank account (in the Bank of America in San Francisco).² He has a month in which to appeal and he has, of course, denied the charges, but there are fairly substantial rumors that the government has considerable evidence of further irregular dealings on his part. When I talked to Thieu last Friday³ afternoon, he had been unaware of Dzu's sentencing by the court Friday morning, and I cautioned him against the possibility of making Dzu appear a martyr at the present time before the Assembly had acted on validation of the election returns. Several reputable Saigon lawyers to whom we have spoken feel that substantial evidence exists that Dzu is guilty as charged, and one of them feels Dzu could have escaped with a fine had he appeared in court. While we had originally anticipated that there might be some outcry charging government "persecution" of Dzu, this has not happened. Dzu does not enjoy a very high personal reputation, and Phan Khac Suu, for example, told an Embassy officer September 18 that he considered Dzu guilty as charged.

2. The relationship between Thieu and Ky seems to have been improved during the past week. A meeting of Thieu and Ky with the inner circle of Generals, including the four corps commanders, General

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Immediate; Nodis. Received at 10:46 a.m. and passed to the White House. Rostow forwarded the telegram to the President on September 20. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 8 B (1) 6/67–11/67, Bunker's Weekly Report to President) A notation on the covering note indicates that the President saw the telegram. The telegram is printed in full in Pike, *The Bunker Papers*, pp. 168–175.

² On September 15 the Saigon Criminal Court convicted Dzu for issuing a bad check and an illegal funds transfer, previous offenses that had been held in abeyance. See *The New York Times*, September 16, 1967.

³ September 13.

Vien, Chief of the JGS, General Tri, Minister of Information, and General Thang took place on Monday, the 11th, and was devoted principally to a discussion of the formation of the new government and to possible assignments of Cabinet posts. No decisions were taken at this meeting. It was agreed that members would give further thought to the problem and meet again on Saturday, the 16th.

3. We have had reports from four of the Generals who were present at the meeting on Saturday and these are in general agreement as to what transpired. All of them expressed satisfaction with the results of the discussions which had taken place. General Lam, I Corps Commander, and General Minh, IV Corps Commander, expressed themselves as being happy about the meeting and said that Thieu and Ky had been brought back closely together again, recognized the importance of their unity, and agreed to work as a team. General Khang, the III Corps Commander, expressed the view that while there is some understandable friction between the two, it has been exaggerated by their entourages while maneuvering for position. Although the main purpose of the meeting was to reach decisions on appointments for Prime Minister and Cabinet posts, it was agreed not to decide on the appointments of Prime Minister and the civilian Cabinet posts until after October 2, by which time the Assembly should have authenticated the election.

4. Thieu outlined his views of the future government which he said he expects to be inaugurated on November 1. He proposed that Cabinet Ministers be appointed on the basis of honesty and ability rather than for political or religious affiliations. He believes that if Cabinet posts were to be divided among the Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, Dai Viets, Buddhists, and Catholics it would not only create disorder but would prove to be unworkable. This is in line with the view which Ky had earlier expressed to me, i.e., that individuals appointed to Cabinet posts on the basis of such affiliations would end up working for the interests of their own organizations rather than the country as a whole. Ambassador Bui Diem expressed a somewhat similar view to me in a conversation we had last Monday. He felt that because of the limited availability of men of outstanding ability and competence the first consideration in Cabinet appointments should be given to these qualities rather than to broadening the base of the government. I expressed the view to him, as I had already done to Thieu and Ky, that these were not necessarily exclusive considerations, and I felt that weight should be given to both in order to enlist the broadest possible support of the people.

5. Thieu apparently did mention at the meeting the name of Truong Thai Ton, now a special assistant to Ky (with rank of Secretary of State) and formerly Minister of Economy and Finance, as a possi-

bility for the post of Prime Minister. Ky apparently still leans toward Nguyen Van Loc. I believe that while neither would be ideal Ton would not be a considerably better appointment than Loc. It was pretty well agreed that since under the Constitution General Cao Van Vien cannot fill concurrently the posts of Minister of Defense and Chief of the JGS, he will continue as Chief of the Joint Staff. General Nguyen Van Vy will be appointed Minister of Defense and General Tri, presently Minister of Information, is slated to succeed General Vy as Chief of Staff of the JGS. I think General Vy will make an excellent Defense Minister, and General Tri will be in a more appropriate and congenial post than that of Minister of Information where he has not been a success. It was further agreed that only the Ministries of Defense, RD, and Security would be held by military appointees and that the other posts would go to civilians. Thieu and Ky agreed to prepare a list of joint recommendations for Cabinet Ministers by October 2.

6. As evidence of a constructive attitude on the part of the military toward the new government is the fact that Gen Cao Van Vien, Chief of the JGS, is having copies of the Constitution printed together with explanatory notes for distribution to all of the armed forces so that there will be a widespread understanding of the Constitution and the obligations of citizens, including the military, toward it.

[Here follows discussion of Senatorial and House elections, pacification, economic matters, Chieu Hoi, and casualties.]

Bunker

333. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in France¹

Washington, September 20, 1967, 1327Z.

40412. For Kissinger. Ref: Paris 3626, 3627, 3536.²

1. You (and Bo) have already cautioned M against reporting to the Elysée, and it continues to be our view that this is highly inadvisable under present circumstances. We agree to your strong objection to M's inclusion of the text of any US message in any such report.

2. In view of Paris 3627, M clearly needs to be cautioned about the necessity to take greater care to preserve the security of the channel.

3. While we agree fully with cautions contained in your 3626 about not appearing "excessively anxious" and the importance of keeping contacts after your departure secret, there are certain risks of exposure if M and A are seen in direct contact with the Ambassador or DCM. We suggest that if you see Bo, you discuss with him directly, or otherwise ask M and A to do so, the procedure Bo would prefer to utilize for communicating with us after your departure. If you agree it should be suggested to Bo that if he prefers you will continue to be available in Cambridge to receive and pass on messages as in past. Bo should also be informed that if he prefers or if the importance of any particular message warrants, we are prepared to send Chester Cooper or other appropriate official to Paris for the purpose of communicating through him.

4. In case Ashmore/Baggs stories of their contacts with Hanoi should arise in coming conversation you should familiarize yourself

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA. Top Secret; Immediate; Nodis/Pennsylvania. Drafted by Read, cleared by Walt Rostow and Read, and approved by Katzenbach.

² In telegram 3626 from Paris, September 19, Bohlen recommended against sending a U.S. Government representative to Paris since "keeping him waiting for a reply might give Hanoi the impression that we are excessively anxious" and could jeopardize the channel's secrecy. Telegram 3627 from Paris, September 19, reported that Marcovich's brother was mentioning publicly that negotiations were going on in Paris involving "an American." In telegram 3536 from Paris, September 19, Kissinger noted that Marcovich had drafted a report detailing his involvement for the French Foreign Ministry in the event that the channel collapsed or ended in failure. At Kissinger's suggestion, Marcovich promised to delete U.S. Government messages to Hanoi. (All *ibid.*)

with Department's September 18 statement carried in wireless file to all diplomatic posts.³

5. For Ambassador and DCM from Acting Secretary: The Secretary and I are most grateful to you for facilitating K's handling of the Pennsylvania channel to date. Thanks to you the communications have gone smoothly and effectively.

Katzenbach

³ Ashmore publicized the story of his involvement in the administration's secret peace contacts on September 18. In a telephone conversation that day, Rusk told Bundy that "this had some bearing on how we handle Kissinger." Rusk added that "one of the problems about dealing with these people who are so far over on that side is they might have entrée in Hanoi and could cut our throats." (Notes of Telephone Conversations, September 18, 4:07 p.m. and 4:18 p.m.; *ibid.*, Rusk Files: Lot 72 D 192, Telcons, 1961–1969 & Presidential) J.R. Wiggins, a reporter for the *Washington Post*, had called Rusk at 3:55 p.m. on the same day and inquired about the release of the story. (Notes of Telephone Conversation, September 18, 3:55 p.m.; *ibid.*) In a telephone conversation 15 minutes earlier, Katzenbach told Rusk that Baggs had labeled as "disgraceful" Ashmore's action. (Notes of Telephone Conversation, September 18, 3:40 p.m.; *ibid.*) The Department of State issued a public statement about the contacts on September 18; see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1967, pp. 990–992.

334. Telegram From the Embassy in France to the Department of State¹

Paris, September 21, 1967, 1740Z.

3803. From Kissinger. A & M saw Bo for one and a half hours at noon today. After a few minutes of personal conversation, M read to Bo the text of my message reported in Paris 3765.² Bo asked for M's notes and M handed them to him. Bo promised to return them to-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA. Top Secret; Flash; Nodis/Pennsylvania. Received at 2:53 p.m. In the covering note transmitting the telegram to the President, September 21, Rostow noted: "Here is the latest from Paris. No movement, but the line is still open." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, PENNSYLVANIA) A notation on the covering memorandum indicates that the President saw the telegram.

² In this message of September 20, Kissinger informed Bo that he would be returning to the United States on September 24; if Bo received word of a reply to the U.S. Government's September 13 message, he could inform Kissinger by then or reach him at Harvard directly or through the two French contacts. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA)

morrow. Bo then asked whether the words were mine or M's interpretation of my remarks. M replied that they had been agreed with me. Bo then replied (the notes were A's): "This channel is very convenient for us. If I have a reply before Saturday³ evening, I shall call you (M). I shall also be in touch with you afterwards as soon as I hear something. But you should be aware of the mood Hanoi as expressed in our Foreign Ministry statement of September 19."⁴ Bo then mentioned bombardment of Haiphong and Vinh but without real conviction and only very briefly.

M then urged Bo to see me or at least to send back a "mild" reply. A & M could vouch for me. To Americans personal contact was important. Those interested in peace on the American side must be given some sign of a reciprocal attitude from Hanoi. Bo replied that he could see private Americans at his discretion. For example he had received David Schoenbrun and was pleased to hear from him that the North Vietnamese Catholics were entirely reconciled with the Government of the DRV. But he could not see any American who spoke for the United States Government or reported directly to them without authorization and he had not yet received it. (*Note: For whatever it is worth, A has the impression that Bo requested this authorization.*) M on his own initiative asked whether Bo would find it easier to speak to someone like Doty (from the U.S. Pugwash Group) who could then report to me or to Washington. Bo replied that this would not cure the basic difficulty that Hanoi is reluctant to talk under duress with any officially connected American. "The Americans are playing a double game. On the one hand they are offering us peace; on the other they increase their bombing." At the same time he repeated his desire to keep the channel open. "I will accept a communication at any time. I will be in touch as soon as I have something to say."

M asked whether the channel was still useful. Bo replied: "Do not worry (*ne vous en faites pas*). If we come to the conclusion that we do not wish to communicate via Kissinger we shall tell you. (*Si jamais nous pensons que nous ne voulons pas communiquer par Kissinger nous vous le dirons.*) If we ever think that you should no longer continue, we shall tell you without hesitation. (*Si jamias nous pensons que vous memes ne devez pas continuer, nous vous dirons sans hesiter.*) But we want you and Kissinger to continue."

M next raised the issue of reporting to the Elysée. He showed Bo his draft report (sent by septel)⁵ and invited comments. He told him

³ September 23.

⁴ Most likely a reference to a Pham Van Dong's statement that talks would rapidly follow a bombing cessation as both sides "knew how to meet each other."

⁵ See footnote 2, Document 333.

of my desire to delete the text of the messages. Bo agreed. Bo's only suggestion was to give the titles of the participants at the June 16–18 Pugwash meeting where the idea of the Hanoi trip originated. He said that if the report is given to the Elysée, it should be made clear that it was not his instigation or request.

Conclusions: (1) Hanoi has had our original proposal for at least twenty five days and message of September 13 for six days. It seems to me that the next move is clearly up to them. If the channel is important to them, it is up to them to put something into it. I therefore recommend that I tell M when I next see him at 14:30 tomorrow that he should tell Bo that we are still waiting for an answer from Hanoi. Until it comes we have nothing further to say.⁶

(2) A believes that for Hanoi the decision to initiate negotiations marks a point of no return and that they may not be free to do as they wish. Even if this correct, my instinct would be that these are difficulties for Hanoi to overcome.

(3) With respect to existing restraints, I would recommend maintaining them for some time longer to give Hanoi a chance to reply or at least to prevent them from blaming their refusal on U.S. escalation.

Bohlen

⁶ Reported in telegram 3908 from Paris, September 22. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA)

335. Telegram From the Station in Saigon to the Central Intelligence Agency¹

Saigon, September 23, 1967.

CAS 2436. Ambassador Bunker released the following message

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Intelligence File, Vietnamese (South) Elections 1967. Secret; Most Sensitive; Immediate Director. Passed by Carver to Read the same day. An attached covering note from Kohler to Katzenbach, undated, reads: "I share the general allergy to intervention in elections. However, I think Viet-Nam is a special case; [I] find Ambassador Bunker's rationale persuasive and have confidence in his good judgment. Consequently, I would recommend approval." An attached telegram to Saigon transmitted approval of Bunker's proposal [*text not declassified*] on September 27. Approval was also transmitted in telegram Director 42657, October 11. (Central Intelligence Agency, DDO/ISS Files, Job 78–32)

late in the evening of 23 September and asks that it be passed to the Secretary of State:

“Although the hurdles of the Presidential and Senatorial elections are behind us, it is apparent that we will continue to experience for some time to come a variety of problems deriving from the change in power relationship between President Thieu and Vice President Ky. That, plus the continued development of the constitutional process as opposed to attempts by the military to maintain control, will probably cause some disturbance during the foreseeable future. Consequently, while I hope and expect that a reasonable adjustment of the Thieu/Ky relationship can gradually be achieved, a part of my continuing contact with the executive elements here will often be an effort simply to keep the peace.

“There is a potentially important ally in this effort—the legislature. I doubt that the legislature will develop real style or accrue genuine political authority in the near future. I am convinced, however, that from the outset, there will be times when we will need to call upon selected individuals in both houses to help bring political brushfires under control. Moreover, in the long run, it will be the development of an independent, responsible legislature that will create and maintain the basis for political stability and growth in South Vietnam.

“Thus, both immediate and future considerations strongly support a prudent investment of our talents and energy in an effort to assure that we have solid, reliable friends in the legislature. It is clearly in the nature of things out here that a portion of our responsibility for working with Parliamentarians must be carried out through CAS. In this regard, good political common sense indicates that the best way to develop a useful relationship with a Parliamentarian is to be of some value to him while he is still a candidate.

“Unlike the Senate elections where the candidates ran as members of a group and the number of groups involved—on a nationwide basis—made the whole process rather unpredictable; in the House elections, single candidates are running, for the most part on their own. [9 lines of source text not declassified]

“Clearly, the nature and scope of our election program will depend upon the resources available to the candidates chosen by us. In view of this, and the fact that the election is to be held just four weeks hence, I urge favorable consideration be given to a program of limited financial support to a group of selected House candidates. Successful establishment of a group responsive to our guidance in the house could represent an effective aid to the accomplishment of our political objectives in South Vietnam.”

336. Notes of Meeting¹

Washington, September 26, 1967, 1:15–2:35 p.m.

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING
WITH
SECRETARY McNAMARA
SECRETARY KATZENBACH
CIA DIRECTOR HELMS
MR. WALT ROSTOW
MR. GEORGE CHRISTIAN

President: Walt, did you get the information to Senator Dirksen and Senator Mansfield? They are battling with Senator Case today.²

Rostow: Yes sir.

President: Nick, did you get that information on the Tonkin Gulf Resolution?³ I want the opinions and precedents on this. If Senator Russell were able, he could present this case very effectively. Russell said it was hypocritical to say they did not understand the resolution when it was passed.

I had an interesting conversation with Prime Minister Menzies over the weekend.⁴ He said he did not see how we could win the war without more public statements. He said there is a need to repeat statements over and over. He thinks we should repeat again how we got into Vietnam, why we are there, and what our purpose is. The luncheon group agreed that more of this needed to be done.

Nick, isn't it bad for those newspapers to be closed down in Saigon?

Katzenbach: There are many newspapers out there. These are all small circulation papers, but yes, it does have some negative effects—more here in the U.S. than out there.

Helms: It's what our newspapers do to it that is critical.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings. Top Secret; Eyes Only. The meeting was held in the second floor dining room of the White House.

² Citing McNamara's testimony concerning the ineffectiveness of bombing North Vietnamese ports Case charged that morning in the Senate that the President's disingenuousness about progress in Vietnam caused a "crisis of confidence." He also criticized Johnson's "perversion" of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution. During debate which followed, both Mansfield and Dirksen challenged Case's assertions and offered support for the administration's Vietnam policy. A discussion of the debate is in William C. Gibbons, *The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War*, pp. 824–827.

³ Presumably a request for a legal opinion on the resolution.

⁴ The President met with former Prime Minister of Australia Sir Robert Menzies for lunch, 2:05–3:15 p.m. (Johnson Library, President's Daily Diary)

President: What about peace negotiations? How are the contacts doing?

Katzenbach: The last message sounded more plaintive than negative.⁵ The channel is still there. The question is will they talk to Henry while bombing continues. He will talk to a non-official rather than to officials.

We suggest they start talking about either substance of stopping or how we get together for talks.

The odds are against talks at this time. I think there is a possibility, although not a very good one. The chances of getting Vietnam resolved before November, 1968, depends on our ability to get talks going.

We should try even if there is little hope for success. Even if you were to get them started and nothing happened it would be good. We would step down some if secret talks began. I do not see a better channel at the moment. I do not see anything better.

In South Vietnam, Helms' people have picked up a man and let him go.⁶ This also may work.

Rostow: Interrupted to mention that Senator Muskie had called concerned over a CBS report that 85% of the Vietnamese election overseeing group thought the Thieu–Ky election was a fraud. The President asked Director Helms to check this and if it is not true, get the information to the Senator.

Secretary Katzenbach: Reported on the Rusk–Gromyko talks which were underway in New York at the U.N. Secretary Katzenbach made the following points:

—Soviets will talk with us on ABM but no date has been agreed to.

—Soviets were not upset by the McNamara speech.

—There had been no talk on Vietnam between the two Foreign ministers.

—There was discussion of Middle East.

On other U.N. activities, Katzenbach reported that Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban said the same thing privately he said publicly. Our problem is to hold onto our friends, including Britain on the issue.

President: Is there anything new on General Wheeler's condition?

Secretary McNamara: He is doing fine. He is in the hospital today for an examination.

⁵ Document 334.

⁶ A reference to what became known as the Buttercup operation. See footnote 4, Document 341.

Secretary McNamara: On targets, the JCS recommends elimination of restrictions around Hanoi. They recommend a strike on Phuc Yen airbase, and they want restrike authority on targets previously hit inside the 10-mile circle. There are 25 targets which have been authorized but not struck.

In my opinion, it would be harmful to the Paris talks if we were to intensify the bombing. It is unlikely that the military progress which they would produce would be great enough to change attitudes toward negotiations.

There have been two questions sent to Hanoi:

1. Do we understand that if we stop the bombing that within two days you will go to the conference table?
2. Will you talk to Kissinger if we hold the current level of bombing?

While there are these discussions I would recommend against additional bombing. We have enough targets for another week.

On Phuc Yen, I see no great risk of the Soviets reacting at this time. I will not strongly recommend against the strike.

We have only lost three aircraft to MIGs, yet we have downed seven of theirs. There are only 27 MIGs in North Vietnam at the present time.

I talked to Ambassador Thompson. He doubted that the Soviets would respond at this time. If we hit it once, we will have to hit it again.

Rostow: We are keeping them busy for the moment repairing the bridges and the thermal power plant. Let's give them another week to play out the string.

President: I see nothing coming from this.

Rostow: I do not see any connection between bombing and negotiations.

Katzenbach: I do not think we are going to get negotiations by bombing.

President: I do not see holding off again. What have we gotten out of this so far.

Katzenbach: We have gotten into communications with them. There have been no communications since February of this year.

The tone of the communications was less strident than before.

It is important to try to get them to talk.

It's worth doing, even at the price of not hitting within the Hanoi circle.

If you measure bombing against the possibilities of the channels, they have a better public stance than we do.

President: What are the arguments of the Joint Chiefs of Staff?

McNamara: The power plant is 50% operative and they are rebuilding it. The two Hanoi bridges are again being used for traffic. They believe it is important to hit the industrial targets to help the war effort.

In my opinion, none of these are strong arguments.

President: Who is influencing Hanoi?

Katzenbach: We are making them believe they can't achieve their goals in the way they wanted.

The difficulty has been in bombing limited targets. There is enough destruction to make it look like we are trying to defeat Hanoi and can't.

I do not think we should stop bombing the North unless we can get to the bargaining table. A pause may help publicly.

I favor a pause between now and February.

President: I do too. But we are too quick to pick up what any professor may get going. I think we should get those targets now.

A pause won't change the political situation. It will give them an answer though that we are prepared to go the last mile.

But I do want to get all those targets before a pause.

McNamara: We are not going to be able to have a pause without the military saying there still are targets to be hit.

Katzenbach: Don't step up the bombing and then pause.

Helms: I do not agree that by not bombing in a particular location it will have any effect on talks.

President: History may make us look silly on this whole thing.

We pull out of Hanoi any bombing for six weeks to let people get in. Then they never go in.

McNamara: The serious problem is that you must show the American people that you are willing to walk that last mile. You sent a good formula. No American President could expect you to do more.

But we do not pay much for keeping this going.

President: I think they are playing us for suckers. They have no more intention of talking than we have of surrendering. In my judgment everything you hit is important. It makes them hurt more.

Relatively few men are holding down a lot of men. I think we should get them down and keep them down. We will give them an opportunity to speak and talk if they will.

If we believe that we should bomb, then we should hit their bridges, their power plants, and other strategic targets outside the ones which we have ruled off-limits.

We get nothing in return for giving all we have got. But I guess a pause won't hurt because the weather is bad anyway. But I do want to

get all the targets hit that we dare approve.⁷ Then we will make public the pause that Thieu had mentioned. If they do not talk we will have to go to more drastic steps.

We are losing support in this country. The people just do not understand the war. But nobody can justify holding off for five weeks. We must look at this thing very carefully.

I agree with Dick Helms. It makes no difference in their minds where we hit.

Hanoi alone will not do it. They still want permanent cessation, their four points, and what they have said.

How do you wrap up the channel if it is getting us nowhere.

McNamara: I would suggest, in that case, that the President authorize Phuc Yen today, then watch all replies from Bo or M & A so you can terminate the exchange if nothing comes of it.

President: I am ready to do that. Wait a week. If they give any indication I am ready to do it.

Katzenbach: Bo could say I'll talk with Kissinger. It makes a difference what we do and say. We should adjust our messages so they can do something or call it off.

President: Nick, give me a paper on what hopes you and State see in this thing. I just do not see them. But I want a paper on this.⁸ You already have given them five weeks.

Katzenbach: But it did not cost us anything.

President: You built a big umbrella which gives them a chance to rebuild. I would deny them that. But let me see it. Write down what we have to gain.

Helms: I do not think it will pay to continue holding off hitting Hanoi. Let's get the public relations aspect out. Let Bob go ahead and tell his people that we will destroy every military target in North Vietnam with the exception of Hanoi and China restricted areas.

We have offered a formula related to bombing. This was unconditional. This could lead to talks. They said no. We regard this as their answer for the time being.

We must design a scenario that would lead to a pause.

⁷ CINCPAC received authorization to bomb Phuc Yen airfield later the same day, but the authorization was withdrawn within 3 days.

⁸ See Document 337.

President: I want Katzenbach to prepare me a memo on why he thinks we should continue this channel, a scenario for wrapping it up, because we have met twice with a firm no.⁹

We owe it to our men to do everything we can. We're not.

Katzenbach: We are talking about a very small area in exchange for what we are doing.

President: But all of this adds up. It is a question of which one of us can last the longest.

McNamara: On the day we gave a message to them we hit Hanoi harder that day than ever before. It was 21–22–23 of August when we hit Hanoi hard. It was the same time as the message was sent. Your formula was excellent. You have a good record since this.

President: We see nothing coming out of it.

McNamara: If the resumption of bombing does not terminate the talks you would want to keep it going in Paris.

Katzenbach: The tone of these talks is better than ever before. We know the amount of messages they have been sending Paris. We can't break the code. Bo has been careful not to slam the door. He has not been permitted to talk to an official American while the bombing is going on. He said to tell A & M.

There then was a discussion of signing the space treaty on October 10. Question was whether or not it should be in Washington or New York. President expressed interest in signing it in Washington because it shows that progress can be made while Vietnam is going on.

⁹ In a covering memorandum to a draft speech on a negotiating position sent to the President on September 26, Rostow noted Katzenbach's desire to delay the speech until the arrival of Bo's response to Kissinger, expected on September 30 or, if the speech could not be delayed, at the very least not offer a formulation for negotiations. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Pennsylvania (continued))

337. Memorandum From Acting Secretary of State Katzenbach to President Johnson¹

Washington, September 26, 1967.

SUBJECT

Negotiations with North Vietnam

This memorandum attempts to answer the question you posed at luncheon.² It represents my own views and I do not know whether or not the Secretary would agree.

I. The Kissinger Exercise.

The significance of the Paris–Kissinger exercise lies in the fact that it is the closest thing we have yet had to establishing a dialogue with North Vietnam. It takes on particular significance in my view because, since last February, every attempt to get into communication with the North Vietnamese has been brutally and immediately rebuffed. This has been true in Moscow in April³ and in Vientiane in June.⁴ By and large it has also been true of indirect communication. While Kissinger has not talked yet directly to Bo, he did succeed in establishing a dialogue with him, through intermediaries and written messages, and Bo's attitude has been consistently to keep the channel open and to encourage dialogue.

To refresh your recollection briefly, the sequence has been as follows:

(1) Our basic message was delivered to Bo on August 25.⁵

(2) On September 11 Bo delivered a formal reply, repeating the standard Hanoi position and arguments, but pointedly declared he was anxious to keep the channel open.⁶

(3) On September 13 we formally replied arguing that our proposal did not involve "conditions".⁷

(4) On September 23 Bo replied, apparently to our message of September 13, complaining about our intensified bombing which Bo gave as the reason for his refusal to see Kissinger.⁸

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, PENNSYLVANIA (continued). Top Secret; Nodis; Personal.

² See Document 336.

³ See footnote 2, Document 127.

⁴ See Document 227.

⁵ See Document 293.

⁶ See footnote 2, Document 315.

⁷ See Document 324.

⁸ The text of Bo's reply is in a note of a telephone conversation between Read and Kissinger, September 24. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA) It is printed in full in Herring, *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 750–752.

(5) On September 25 Kissinger replied defending our bombing policy partially on grounds of secrecy.⁹ On September 25 Bo also stated the following:

“Bo replied that the DRV Prime Minister had made it clear that there could be no *formal* discussions between the US and DRV as long as *any level* of bombing continued in the North, but, Bo added, *preliminary discussions* between Bo and Kissinger might not fall under such prohibition. Bo said he would let him know whether such preliminary discussions were possible within a few days.” (underscoring added)¹⁰

We should hear towards the end of the week whether or not there can be “preliminary discussions” between Bo and Kissinger. I find it significant that the phraseology “preliminary discussions” was employed by Bo. Preliminary to what? It would seem to me that these discussions could only be preliminary to formal discussion which could take place if our offer was accepted. Kissinger, if he talks to Bo, should pressure the modalities of formal discussions: time, place, date, possibly agenda.

This seems to me the easier because of the statement today from Hanoi that North Vietnam would be prepared to open “serious and significant talks” three or four weeks after the United States halted its bombing without formulating any conditions. (The three to four weeks is clearly negotiable in the light of other information if we can get into preliminary discussions.)

We know that Bo has been in constant communication with Hanoi. His demeanor has indicated that to a large extent he was acting under instructions. We know that we are dealing with a divided government in North Vietnam, and it is at least a reasonable inference that our offer has sufficient appeal for them not to reject it out of hand as they could have done by refusing further communication, and which they have done in the past. This hypothesis seems to be supported by the public statement from Hanoi today which, if nothing else, is certainly the most forthcoming statement they have made on the subject of negotiations.

If you are seriously considering a bombing pause to test Hanoi’s intentions, it seems to me particularly important that the Paris chan-

⁹ The text of Kissinger’s reply is in a note of a telephone conversation between Read and Kissinger, September 25. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA) It is printed in Herring, *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 753–754. According to an untitled and unsigned Department of State memorandum dated September 26, after presenting Kissinger’s proposal, Marcovich added his suggestion that preliminary discussions could begin if the United States reverted to its August level of bombing. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA)

¹⁰ Printed here as italics.

nel not be abruptly ruptured. One thing that we have learned is that once communication is broken off, it takes considerable time to turn it on again. And it seems to me that the most effective pause would be one which followed some kind of dialogue—"preliminary discussions"—of the type contemplated by Bo.

II. Relationship of Pause in Bombing and Discussions.

Virtually every time we have had a contact, direct or indirect, with Hanoi, they or their spokesman have cautioned that an escalation of bombing would prejudice the condition of discussions. This was true with respect to the Polish operation, the Moscow operation, and the current Paris operation. Whether or not there is any merit or substance to the Hanoi statements the simple fact is that there have been actions widely regarded as escalatory which coincide with our efforts to enter into negotiations. It is entirely possible—I think probable—that these actions were seized upon as excuses by Hanoi. But it is not possible to prove that point and there is sufficient plausibility in their position to cast doubt in the minds of other governments and a substantial segment of American public opinion as to the sincerity of our efforts. Since I know that our efforts have been sincere and since I think these are merely excuses, I would like to eliminate all possible doubt with respect to the Kissinger negotiations. If Bo refuses to see Kissinger, then I see no problem with resuming the normal level of bombing in Hanoi. If Bo agrees to see Kissinger, I think it important to continue the circle at least until we see whether the Kissinger channel is leading towards prompt and productive discussions.

I do not believe that Hanoi is presently likely to enter into serious discussions. But I think that it is important in terms of both circumstances and public relations that we test that possibility to the hilt. I do not think we pay a heavy price in delaying hitting again a very small percentage of the targets in North Vietnam. We know that destruction of those targets this week or next week can have absolutely no significance in terms of the conduct of the war. There is an outside chance that it could have some impact on the search for peace. And I would play along with that chance—which I acknowledge to be very small indeed—because the consequences are so great.

Respectfully,

Nicholas deB. Katzenbach

338. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, September 26, 1967, 1130Z.

6934. Ref: Saigon 6624.²

1. I saw Thieu this morning (September 26) primarily to discuss with him our concern over the situation in the National Assembly with respect to the forthcoming vote on the validation of the Presidential elections. I told him that I had heard disturbing reports of division in the Assembly and mentioned that a number of Vietnamese had expressed concern to me and members of my staff over the possibility that the Assembly would vote against validation. I mentioned specifically the reports that the Democratic Alliance Bloc, which has been the government bloc in the Assembly and responsive to Ky, was split on this issue and might throw enough votes against validation to decide the issue.

2. I emphasized to Thieu that he and Ky together have a great responsibility to be sure that the Assembly acts in a responsible manner. I reminded him that U.S. reaction to invalidation would be most adverse and could in fact create major difficulties for continued U.S. support for Viet-Nam.

3. Thieu said that he was well aware of all of this and that he has been working on the problem and Ky has been working on it also. Thieu said that he saw Le Quang Liem of the Democratic Alliance Bloc yesterday and told him frankly that it is absolutely essential that the Assembly validate the elections. If it should fail to do so people would lose confidence in elections and indeed it would be uncertain whether elections would be held for a long time again. He said he emphasized to Liem that it was not a question of individuals but a question of preserving and continuing the progress that has been made here in the promotion of democratic institutions. Liem told Thieu that he believes the majority of the Assembly will vote for validation. Thieu emphasized a simple majority is not enough, there must be an impressive majority to affirm support of the elections. Thieu said that he was also going to talk to Security Minister General Linh Quang Vien later in the

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 15–1 VIET S. Secret; Priority; Exdis. There is no indication on the telegram when it was received.

² In telegram 6624 from Saigon, September 22, Bunker reported on a meeting with Thieu on that date in which they discussed the selection of a Prime Minister and development of an action program for the new government, including various measures such as the enforcement of land reform. (Ibid.)

day to check up on all the National Assembly members and where they stood as individuals on the vote.

4. Thieu said that he plans today to see Colonel Dam Van Quy of the DAB and Nguyen Thien Nhon, a PAC member and insider of Ky's civilian entourage. He said that Quy and Nhon had both been reported to be active in stirring up the students to denounce the elections and he intends to warn them of the dangers of continuing such activities. He cited Le Phuoc Sang as possibly the prime troublemaker in the Democratic Alliance Bloc. Ky told Thieu that Sang was angry at him (Ky) for failing to support his Senatorial list during the election.

5. Thieu repeated that he is keeping in close touch with Ky on this whole matter and he thinks that the vote will come out all right.³ The Movement for the Renaissance of the South (MRS) bloc has been against validation but has now switched their position and he believes that they will vote for validation. He also thinks the independents are going to be smart enough to understand that the issue is not one of individuals but of the fate of the nation. Also most encouraging is the report of the Central Election Council which has reported to the Special Committee of the National Assembly that none of the complaints filed with it have been substantiated. One important question not yet resolved however is the manner in which the Assembly will vote, that is by secret ballot, show of hands, or roll call. Thieu feels it most important that the vote be public so that each man will be publicly responsible for his vote.

6. I turned then to the question of what progress he is making toward formation of the Cabinet. Thieu said that he still plans to announce his Cabinet shortly after the Senate is installed which he thinks will be October 5 or 6. He hopes by October 15 to have the new members working as a shadow Cabinet so that they can get familiar with their jobs and be ready to move into them by November 1.

7. Thieu said that he was still working on the question of Prime Minister and that at present he had under consideration Nguyen Luu Vien, Tran Van Do, Nguyen Huu Hanh, and Nguyen Van Tuong of the

³ In telegram 7060 from Saigon, September 27 (Bunker's 22d weekly telegram to the President), Bunker reported that he had seen Ky later that day. The Prime Minister vowed to ensure that his DAB supporters would vote for validation of the elections. (Ibid., POL 27 VIET S) also reported in telegram 7051, September 27; *ibid.*, POL 15–1 VIET S) Bunker's weekly report is printed in full in Pike, *The Bunker Papers*, pp. 176–184. An INR memorandum entitled "Validation of the South Vietnamese Elections Likely But Impact Questionable," September 27, suggested that the DAB's opposition was due to "inadequate financial backing" from Ky and was a way for the Prime Minister to extract concessions from the President-elect for himself and members of the DAB. As a countermeasure, Thieu was attempting to bribe some of its membership. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 14 VIET S) On October 3 the Constituent Assembly voted 58 to 43 to validate the election results.

SCA. However, Thieu said, Ky has indicated to him that as a matter of personal pride and prestige he would like very much to have Nguyen Van Loc appointed as Prime Minister and indicated that if this should not work out after three to six months Thieu could of course replace him. Thieu said that the Generals also would like to have him take Ky's feeling in this matter into consideration. Thieu recognizes that Ky has been affected by being placed in position of No. 2 and giving in to him on the Loc appointment might help. Thieu said he recognizes also that it is essential that he have good relations with Ky, that they must work together and this might be beneficial in this regard.

8. I emphasized my full agreement with him on how essential it is that he and Ky have a good working relationship. I said that I thought this more important even than the question of who was Prime Minister, that I felt they must have a workable relationship and if he felt that the Loc appointment was necessary in order for him to achieve this relationship then we would be sympathetic to his problem.

9. Thieu said that he was giving it very serious thought. He said after all Loc is Southern, he is a Buddhist and though not an outstanding lawyer, he is honest, had presided skillfully over the People's Army Council and should be able to work well with the National Assembly. Thieu recognized that if he makes such an appointment he runs the risk of being accused of giving in to Ky but I have a feeling that he will be willing to accept this if it will bring about an effective working relationship with Ky.

10. Thieu thanked me for the draft platform memo which I had sent to him (reftel). He said he liked it and had sent it on to his "brain trust" asking them to incorporate the ideas into the draft of his own platform.

11. Briefly at the end of our discussion I took up with Thieu the question of Communications and Transportation Minister Truong Van Thuan. I reviewed for him quickly the question of the Caribous for PA&E still on the ground in Bangkok, the possible purchase of the Caravelles for Air Viet-Nam, the granting of overflight rights to Air France between Phnom Penh and Shanghai and the squeeze that Thuan is trying to put on us in general in connection with Continental Air. I said that we considered the man corrupt and extremely unreliable to work with. Thieu appeared to agree fully. He said that there is no question Thuan is corrupt and he will be the first man in the present government to go.

Bunker

339. Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (Bundy)¹

Washington, September 28, 1967.

DIPLOMATIC AND BOMBING ACTIONS IN THE NEAR FUTURE

We should very soon have a somewhat clearer picture whether Hanoi has any interest in our stopping the bombing altogether under “no advantage” circumstances on the military side, or whether Hanoi is interested in “preliminary discussions” if we simply refrained from hitting in the area of Hanoi and perhaps Haiphong. At the moment, the latter form of interest seems most likely to emerge, but it may be that the whole thing will die and leave us with a pretty clear picture that Hanoi is not interested in anything for the time being.

If Hanoi does move toward our stopping the bombing under “no advantage” circumstances, then we would of course virtually have to follow through on this, and any “pause” scenario would be in these terms.

If Hanoi shows the second type of interest in “preliminary discussions,” then again we should follow through, being prepared to add a limited Haiphong restraint to our existing Hanoi restraint, but excluding any wider restraints, and any restraint in the DMZ particularly.

The key question for present analysis arises if Hanoi fails to follow through on either of the two possibilities, and thus indicates pretty clearly that it has no interest in moving at the present time. In this case, any “pause” would be in effect “blind.” The pros and cons of such a “blind pause” need careful evaluation before we drift any further in that direction. This memorandum argues that there are two other options that might well be preferable:

First, a continuing degree of restraint and a new approach in the direction of “preliminary discussions” in a month or six weeks, and, second, a serious effort to follow up on the Canadian proposal. These two options are analyzed here, together with the pros and cons of a “blind pause.”

*Pros and Cons of a Blind Pause**Pros*

1. We would get a lot of credit in some circles in the US, and in some key areas abroad.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Bundy Files: Lot 85 D 240, Kissinger—1967. Top Secret/Pennsylvania.

2. We would be demonstrably making a serious try, so that if it failed we might be in a stronger position to keep public opinion level and to go ahead as we wish.

3. With the weather that prevails between now and the end of the year, the military disadvantages are at their lowest level.

Cons

1. Our gains at home and abroad could be nullified or even turned into losses if we had to resume.

2. It now appears highly likely that, unlike the 1965–66 long pause, Hanoi would do or say “something” that would vastly complicate the problem. They have shown themselves much more sophisticated in the last 12 months, and there are many gambits they could use to make it extremely difficult for us to resume and to prove that we have made a serious try without any response.

3. Whatever our objective view of the military consequences, we must reckon that any increased or even continued North Vietnamese activity in the South would be attributed by many circles, including our own military, to the pause. The picture would be painted that Marines were dying near the DMZ because of men and ammunition that would not have come down if we were still bombing.

4. If in fact we have had a negative reading from our present explorations, it would surely mean that Hanoi would be extremely unlikely to respond seriously. Their whole pattern of decision-making has been one of quite firm decisions that are then adhered to for a substantial period. They may or may not have now made a firm decision to hold on until our elections at all costs, but if they close down the existing channel the odds seem overwhelming that there must have been a politburo decision to stick it out at least for the next few months. Yet, this is not at all inconsistent with their playing games.

5. If we felt we had to resume, the pressures from the hawks would greatly increase, while at the same time the doves could never be persuaded that there might not have been something if we kept going. The net effect could be greatly to strengthen both extremes, and to narrow the middle-ground supporters of our policy.

Net Evaluation

On this assessment, a blind pause seems to have preponderant disadvantages.

The Option of Generalized Restraint

This option would consist of simply keeping the bombing at reasonable levels, with only the most occasional strikes in or near Hanoi and Haiphong. This may well be the pattern that weather would dictate in any event, and the striking point is that, when we went through

somewhat the same pattern last fall, the Soviets at least have told us that we gave Hanoi the impression that there might have been some possibility of movement.

Against such a pattern, the option would visualize our holding off until mid-November and then trying again in the direction of "preliminary discussions."

This option is a much looser one than a "blind pause." It has none of the immediate advantages, but equally none of the very grave succeeding disadvantages. It could lay the groundwork for progress toward the end of the year, which might be our last clear chance before Hanoi decides that our election is an overriding timing factor and that it simply must hold on for the remaining months until that election. There may or may not be much of a chance of a change in Hanoi's attitude by the end of the year, and much would depend on political progress in the South. There is at least a chance of such progress, and it might well be reflected in the kind of upturn in the Chieu Hoi figures that we encountered at the same time last year.

Canadian Option

This is a somewhat longer shot. But the fact is that Martin's reiteration of the idea of stopping the bombing in return for demilitarization of the DMZ has given us the opportunity of following up on this.² From a practical military standpoint, the trade is in fact a better one than the "no advantage" formula as we have defined it to Hanoi.

Under this option, we could follow up publicly, but this has the disadvantage of forcing Hanoi into immediate rejection. Alternatively, and more effectively, we could encourage the Canadians privately and give them full support with the Indians, Poles, and others who would have to be brought in.

In addition to its lesser military disadvantages than the "no advantage" formula, this one has the additional point that it does not require Hanoi to admit anything or to take any specific action. The simple act of demilitarization of the DMZ does the job and, in the present circumstances, would help us greatly in our most difficult sector. Any chance that Hanoi would interpret our favorable actions as a sign of weakness would to a large extent be offset by the fact that this was a Canadian initiative.

² In conjunction with reissuing his offer, Martin stated that North Vietnamese Government officials had told him that they desired to initiate peace talks. See *The New York Times*, September 15, 1967.

340. Editorial Note

On September 29, 1967, President Lyndon Johnson spoke before the National Legislative Conference in San Antonio, Texas. His speech represented a major policy statement on Vietnam. In particular, the President put forth a new offer to the North Vietnamese, one that was based upon prior discussions conducted through North Vietnamese representative in Paris Mai Van Bo and unofficial U.S. envoy Henry Kissinger. What became known as the "San Antonio Formula" was Johnson's attempt to extend an olive branch to Hanoi: "The United States is willing to stop all aerial and naval bombardment of North Vietnam when this will lead promptly to productive discussions. We, of course, assume that while discussions proceed, North Vietnam would not take advantage of the bombing cessation or limitation." For full text of the speech, see *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1967*, Book II, pages 876–881.

Despite a simultaneous U.S. rescinding of the authorization to bomb Phuc Yen airfield and a scaling back of the overall level of bombing, the North Vietnamese eschewed the opportunity to enter into negotiations. In Paris the next day, Bo announced that his government had refused him permission to enter into direct exchanges with Kissinger in light of the increased bombing since July. (Telephone conversation between Kissinger and Read, September 30, 9 a.m.; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA) An October 3 article in the North Vietnamese official newspaper *Nhan Dan*, reporting on the Politburo's rejection of Johnson's formula for peace, asserted that the U.S. President had no right to insist on North Vietnamese military de-escalation while the United States escalated the bombing over Vietnam. See *The New York Times*, October 4, 1967.

341. Notes of Meeting¹

Washington, October 3, 1967.

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH SECRETARY
RUSK, SECRETARY McNAMARA, MR. ROSTOW, CIA DIRECTOR
HELMS, AND GEORGE CHRISTIAN

[Here follows discussion of the Middle East and arms control.]

The President: What do we know about the negotiations?

Secretary Rusk: We will know in two days. Kissinger told them that we are against waiting any longer, that we are getting impatient. Bo wrote a message which is on the way by air mail special delivery. In his phone call with Kissinger, Bo said something like talks will start after the cessation of bombing.²

Rostow: To correct that, it was that talks *could* start but no other assurances were given.

Director Helms: There were some great difficulties because we had an American who does not understand much French talking to a Frenchman who does not understand much English over a trans-Atlantic phone call. It is important that we wait and see what the written message actually says.

The President: What about the Shah and his efforts?³

Secretary Rusk: He may make unilateral contact with Hanoi. I do not think he will get anywhere. He may get a group of countries together to push negotiations. The Shah is one of our good friends on this.

The President: Did you talk to Gromyko on the bombing?

Secretary Rusk: I told him nobody would tell us what would happen if the bombing stopped. The Russians have given up any attempt to try to influence Hanoi.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings. Top Secret; Eyes Only. The meeting lasted from 6:10 to 9:32 p.m. (Johnson Library, President's Daily Diary)

² According to summaries of telephone conversations between Read and Kissinger, October 2–3, Marcovich flew to Rome to confer with Aubrac (before telephoning Kissinger in the United States) about a message from Bo that they considered so important that they would not fully divulge it over the telephone. Kissinger's sense of the North Vietnamese position as suggested in the forthcoming message was that talks could begin immediately after a halt, although the DRV would not give any assurances of that. The notes taken at the meeting with Bo, which included his inter-lineated corrections, were mailed to Kissinger on October 3. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA)

³ Since June the Shah of Iran was attempting to establish a new mechanism to bring about peace by organizing a "club" of Asian nations, including Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Japan, and Cambodia, which potentially could mediate between the principal adversaries in the Vietnam conflict. Documentation on this effort is *ibid.*, POL 27–14 VIET and POL IRAN-US; and Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Fleming.

The Secretary discussed the prisoner who had been released to the NLF.⁴ This prisoner, a woman, is the wife of one of the high ranking members of the Politburo. We need to stir Thieu and Ky up to probe around more with the NLF.

Bunker should ask Thieu and Ky to get something going. This one is purely our thing. We need to get them going on something.

Mr. Rostow: It would be excellent for Thieu to say in a very lucid inaugural speech that the NLF has a role in the political future of the country. It would help us too.

The President: With validation behind us, we should get Thieu to get the most progressive civilians in government. As I told Walter Washington in setting up the District of Columbia Government, there is a need to “get with it” out there.

We need programs for health and education and land reform. They have got to show that they know what they are doing.

We need to get General Westmoreland to get the South Vietnamese army in line. They have got to get in where the fighting is. We cannot have our fatalities running higher than they are on the Vietnamese side. I want to know it first if this is a white man’s war, as so many people are charging.

On another issue, the President said that the leadership of Congress indicated to him in a meeting Monday night that it would not tolerate the large demonstration which is planned for late October.⁵ I

⁴ On February 28 Pham Thi Yen, the wife of NLF Central Committee member Tan Buu Kiem, was released from GVN custody through the intervention of the CIA Station in Saigon in order to deliver a message to her husband requesting the establishment of covert contacts. The NLF’s response was not apparent until August 15, when a Viet Cong intermediary, Sau Ha, was arrested in Saigon by the police when he tried to deliver a message from Tran Bach Dang of COSVN to Bunker. Dang’s message contained an offer for a prisoner exchange which proposed that the NLF would release U.S. prisoners after the release of several captive Viet Cong. On September 9 one of the prisoners named in Dang’s letter, Truong Dinh Tong, was released as a first step in initiating such an exchange. Within 2 weeks, Tong returned from VC-held territory with a message that Dang was ready to begin negotiations on the matter. Provided radio equipment by the CIA Station, Tong set out again on September 29 to meet with Dang. (“Operations Targeted at the National Liberation Front,” attachment to message from Helms to the President, October 7; Central Intelligence Agency, DCI (Helms) Files, Job 80–B01285A, Helms Chrono, Aug–Dec 1967, 01 Aug–31 Dec 67) The exercise was slugged Buttercup. See footnote 3, Document 369.

⁵ From 5:55 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on October 2, the President met with Representatives John W. McCormack (D–MA), Carl Albert (D–OK), Hale Boggs (D–LA), Senator Mike Mansfield (D–MO), and Postmaster General Lawrence O’Brien. Senator Robert Byrd (D–WV) and Representative George Mahon (D–TX) joined the meeting while it was in progress. (Johnson Library, President’s Daily Diary) Notes of the meeting are *ibid.*, Tom Johnson’s Notes of Meetings. During the period October 21–22, approximately 50,000 antiwar protesters participated in a march on the Pentagon and a rally at the Lincoln Memorial.

have told Secretary McNamara to get going on plans to protect the White House, the Pentagon and the Capitol.

Secretary McNamara: Warren Christopher⁶ is heading up the task force which is meeting periodically on this. There are some very key questions which must be answered. They would include whether the President should be in Washington or not.

The President: Yes, I will be here, they are not going to run me out of town.

Secretary McNamara: The President's presence in Washington may do more to stimulate than to calm it. In any case, that is one of the questions we have to discuss. We have got to train the Washington police and the National Guard to handle this job. We also have to figure out how to arrest thousands and put them in jail if it is justified. The jails won't hold the numbers that could be arrested.

The GSA has done a magnificent job in training the guards at the Pentagon. You can't imagine how they are faced with provocations. They do anything which would further aggravate the situation.

If we are asked, I think we should tell the press that we are prepared to maintain order.

It is important to remember that they are not only after the Pentagon but will approach the White House.

They have not requested audiences with any of us but they most surely will. If they ask to see the President, I do not think it would be wise. It would be better for some of us, perhaps myself, to meet with them.

The President: I saw some leaks on my meeting with the Harvard educators last week.⁷

George Christian: I thought that the fact the President met with those people did us a lot of good.

The President: Bob, Did you see the *New York Times* story on resistance to the draft?

Secretary McNamara: Yes, I am concerned about racism in the military service. There is a movement of civilian dissatisfaction into the services. I am also concerned about resistance to the draft. There have been some cases, one in Dover, Delaware, which shows that there are problems of this type.

I met with a group of Negro publishers last week to discuss this matter.

⁶ Deputy Attorney General.

⁷ The President met with a group of Harvard professors in the evening of September 26. A record of the meeting, Notes of the President's Meeting with Educators, September 26, is in the Johnson Library, Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings.

The President: I want you to take the *New York Times* article and analyze it and let me know what you think of it.

What are we doing about Westmoreland's memorandum on the DMZ?⁸

Secretary McNamara: We are doing the following:

—We will accelerate sending out brigades.

—We will retain the 9th Marine Amphibious Units.

—We expect to increase the B-52 sorties from 600 to 1200 per month. This should be obtained by early next year. The Air Force is not sure they can meet this schedule.

—We are investigating the use of 2000 pound bombs, although the Air Force is not sure this is wise.

—We will check into the spacing of the M-36 weapons. This is a fuse which is applied to bombs to delay their detonation.

The President asked what happened in the DMZ, why were they no longer shelled at the Marine site at Conthien.

Secretary McNamara said he did not know if this was a result of our action or their decision.

The President asked if we should move our people back, as has been suggested?

Secretary McNamara: I do not know. There is a very detailed tactical decision, and I would prefer to leave that to the Joint Chiefs. In my opinion, however, I would move it around.

Secretary McNamara continued: —We are going to shave unit training but we are not going to shave any individual training. Unit training will be cut by four weeks, but General Westmoreland will give them four weeks of unit training when they get out there to make up for this.

—It will probably be July before the Vietnamese get their 60,000 to 65,000 more men into action. The problem is with non-commissioned officers and officers.

—The Thais have come in with a message through the Ambassador that they should contribute 5000 troops rather than 10,000 troops as had been previously discussed.⁹

⁸ In a message to CINCPAC and the JCS, September 28, Westmoreland forwarded his plan for re-deployment of the forces under his command due to increased enemy activity in I CTZ. The document is excerpted in U.S. House of Representatives, Armed Services Committee, *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 5, Vol. II, pp. 219–220.

⁹ There was confusion about the exact number of troops that the Thai Government wanted to dispatch to South Vietnam. Telegram 4302 from Bangkok, October 9, detailing a meeting between the U.S. Ambassador and the Thai Prime Minister, reported that the Thai Government only planned to send forces that would raise the number of its troops to 10,500. It had not been the intention of the Thai Government to send an additional augmentation of 10,000 men. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–3 VIET S)

The President said that he had told Australian Treasurer William McMahon that the President would be able to hold out longer in Vietnam if Prime Minister Holt would put in 5000 more men. I told him we need some more troops. He told me how he lost some elections and they were not in a good position at the moment.¹⁰

Secretary McNamara: I told him about the same thing. Our people will not permit us to stand around.

We would make a bad mistake. We signed an agreement with Australia last year without any provisos that we would supply credit for up to \$90 million. Congress recently has denied us that authority. I told him that we would stand behind this somehow, although I am not sure how we will do it.

The President: Prime Minister Menzies said that everybody must speak on our policies frequently. He said that we should repeat ourselves frequently, because we never are speaking to the same audience twice.¹¹

He thought Senator Kuchel made a very good speech today on the consequences of stopping the bombing.¹²

A captured document from a North Vietnam Ph.D. showed that the Gallup poll in this country sustained them in Hanoi.¹³ This Ph.D. also said, "How can we believe anything Johnson says if his own people do not believe him?"

Secretary McNamara continued: It is important for us to get extra free world troops into Vietnam. We need them. The people out there have got to know what is going on.

—We will accelerate the shipment of M-16's to the ARVN. We think we should put all these guns in Southeast Asia and not sell any outside of this area.

—We are also working on intensifying the training to provide better field accuracy in the use of artillery.

The President then mentioned a delegation which would be sent to the Vietnam inaugural. The President said he would talk to Vice President Hubert Humphrey about heading the delegation tomorrow.

¹⁰ The President met with McMahon and John Keith Waller, the Australian Ambassador, on October 2. (Johnson Library, President's Daily Diary) No record of the meeting has been found.

¹¹ See footnote 4, Document 336.

¹² In response to a speech in the Senate on October 2 by Senator John Sherman Cooper (R-KY) advocating a unilateral cessation, in a public statement the next day Senator Thomas Kuchel (R-CA) stated his opposition to what he termed a call for a unilateral halt. For a summary of its text, see *The New York Times*, October 4, 1967. On the Senate floor, Kuchel noted progress in Vietnam and accused dissenters of undermining the war effort. The text of his remarks is in *Congressional Record*, vol. 113, p. 27442.

¹³ Not found.

The President then mentioned a memorandum from Congressman Tip O'Neill of Cambridge, Massachusetts.¹⁴ The information was that O'Neill had changed from a Hawk position to a Dove position with the help of two assistant secretaries, a CIA agent, and representatives of the Department of Defense. The President said he was astounded to find that there were several groups of people who were working to get Congressmen who are in agreement with our policies to make a reassessment. In this case, Senator Teddy Kennedy had approached Congressman O'Neill and asked him to review his position on Vietnam rather than risk political disaster. Congressman O'Neill talked with several people in the administration. A press article which mentioned Congressman O'Neill's change in position pointed out that it was the President's own people that were responsible for the change.

The President said we should remember that what we are saying today may change next week. We should never lock ourselves in positions publicly which would not allow us to change them.

Secretary McNamara: If we stop the bombing, I think that the Pennsylvania formula (the Kissinger formula) is appropriate.

The President: I wouldn't stop the bombing unless they agree:

1. To meet promptly
2. To push for a settlement.

Secretary McNamara: It is important that we know the *facts about* the bombing. It is not a fact that pauses have hurt the lines of communication in the North. He said a CIA report had been prepared on the request of the Department of Defense. The report was given to Secretary McNamara today. He said that the information contained in it was completely consistent with monthly DIA–CIA reports.

Secretary Rusk: If the bombing isn't having that much effect, why do they want to stop the bombing so much?

Mr. Rostow: The bombing and the other things are making it very unpleasant and very costly for them.

The President read aloud parts of a CIA analysis on the effect of Rolling Thunder.¹⁵

Director Helms: We will have to do over all that we have done in Hanoi, particularly the power plants, the bridges, and the rail lines.

Mr. Rostow: If I could sum up, this is the effect of the bombing:

- Industrial and agricultural production has been cut.
- 500,000 men have been diverted full and some part time as a result of the bombing.

¹⁴ Representative Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr. (D-MA).

¹⁵ See footnote 2, Document 345.

—It is a heavy cost.

—But they have the kind of tactics that can still sustain them at this cost if they choose to.

—If we stop the bombing, it will bring their economy back up and permit them to increase their commitment in the South.

—No bombing means less strain and less cost.

Secretary McNamara: I do not agree with that.

The President: I want the best case from you, Walt, for bombing all targets and I want from Secretary McNamara a position on this.

There was then the discussion of the polls, including the New York poll. The President said that he believed we had lost people away from us in the last two weeks. He pointed out again the need to be making more speeches, although they may be rather similar in nature.

Secretary Rusk: I found in my own experience that you cannot say the same thing twice in Washington. But you can get out in other states and make the same speech and get a very good reaction.

The President: We have to get answers to all of these slogans which everybody is making up. We need a few slogans of our own. We need to answer the slogans:

“Stop the bombing; Negotiate now; Enclave Theory Stalemate.”

Secretary McNamara: We have enough targets for the time being. We should have a separate meeting with the Joint Chiefs on bombing. They recommend Phuc Yen Air Field again.

Secretary McNamara: Not right now, I would defer that 24 hours until we get Pennsylvania out of the way.

The President read ticker items of Senator Dirksen’s debate on the Senate floor today with Senators Fulbright and Mansfield and others.¹⁶ The President said that the Ways and Means Committee shelved the tax message today.

The President said he did not want any of the information which he was about to discuss to go outside of the room. The President asked what effect it would have on the war if he announced he was not going to run for another term. He said if it were set either way today, the decision would be that he would not run.

¹⁶ In a speech on the Senate floor, Dirksen defended the administration’s Vietnam policy and argued against a proposed halt. Fulbright and Mansfield, among others, challenged his assertions. See *Congressional Record*, vol. 113, pp. 27576–27584.

The President said he thought it would be advantageous to welcome both the Democrats and the Republicans to come out with the programs and policies and let the American people decide who they believe should be their next President. He said the President is already in the goldfish bowl, so it might be good for all of those who want to have the job to express themselves to the people. He said he was considering welcoming all comers to come out with their programs.

Secretary McNamara: I do not think that the Democrats should get out on the block.

Secretary Rusk: You must not go down. You are the Commander-in-Chief, and we are in a war. This would have a very serious effect on the country.

The President: If I were to run again, I would be the first President to do it. That is, no other President who has served for part of a term, then for a full term has ever succeeded himself for another full term.

Secretary McNamara: I don't think you should appear too cute on this.

The President: What I am asking is what would this do to the war.

Secretary Rusk: Hanoi would think they have got it made.

The President: Our people will not hold out four more years. I want to get rid of every major target. Between now and election, I am going to work my guts out. I would be 61 when I came back in, and I just don't know if I want four more years of this. I would consider telling the American people that it is an awfully long period. But I am afraid it would be interpreted as walking out on our men.

We are very divisive [*divided*]. We don't have the press, the newspapers or the polls with us, although when I get out into the country it seems different than it is here.

Secretary Rusk: Victor Riesle, a labor columnist, said you would win by a bigger margin next year than you did before.

The President: What I really want to know is the effect of the announcement, what we say if we do decide that way, and the timing of it.

Secretary McNamara: Of course, there would be no worry about money and men. We could get support for that. I do not know about the psychology in the country, the effect on the morale of the men, and the effect on Hanoi.

I do think that they would not negotiate under any circumstances and they would wait for the 1968 elections.

The President then read Congressional reports on what various members of the Congress were saying about Vietnam. The President said that 95% of the people believe there has been a change of attitude

on Vietnam. They all think that we will lose the election if we do not do something about Vietnam quick. They are all worried about expenses.

Secretary Rusk: In my opinion, the tax bill made many doves.

342. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, October 4, 1967, 1100Z.

7619. For the President from Bunker. Herewith my twenty-third weekly telegram:

A. General

1. The political pot which was simmering the week before boiled over last week with the approach of the Assembly vote on validation October 2. Political infighting, attempted extortion, and blackmail reached a high crescendo. Some of the groups, notably some members of the Democratic Alliance Bloc (DAB), formerly supporters of General Ky, carried their efforts right down to the wire. Factors in these maneuvers were the prospective loss of jobs and income on the part of Assembly members, disaffection among the forty-eight Assembly members who were defeated candidates for the Senate as well as three defeated Presidential candidates, also Assembly members, and claims of broken promises and lack of support during the campaign.

2. On the afternoon of September 28, four members of the DAB, who were members of the Special Election Committee of the Assembly, and whose spokesmen were Le Phuoc Sang and Colonel Dam Van Quy, sent for a CAS contact and informed him that they wished me to transmit to General Thieu as a condition for voting for validation of the elections the following demands: (A) Ky to have the right to name the

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Immediate; Nodis. Received at 8:20 a.m. In the covering note to a copy of this telegram sent to the President, Rostow wrote: "The reputation of generals in history depends on one or two key decisions they make right or wrong amidst the fog of battle. So with Ambassadors. Ellsworth's account of the situation he faced just before the validation vote and what he did (at the beginning of this report) indicates you picked the right man. The rest of the report will also interest you." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 8B(1)[B]) The notation "L" on the covering note indicates that the President saw the telegram. The telegram is printed in full in Pike, *The Bunker Papers*, pp. 185–195.

Prime Minister and three other Cabinet members (Sang and Quy indicating that they would expect Cabinet posts); (B) Ky to control the reorganization of the armed forces and the administrative organization; (C) Each member of the DAB to receive 300,000 piasters. They were considerate enough to add that they would wait until noon the next day for my answer. On Friday² morning, through my liaison contact with Ky, I had the above information relayed to him saying that I thought he would want to be aware of this attempted blackmail to which, of course, I had no intention of responding and that I was sure he was aware what the repercussions would be should this become public knowledge.

3. Bui Diem came to see me Friday evening to say that he and General Ky were very concerned about the situation. While Ky had talked to some of the DAB members, he thought it important that General Thieu should talk to them also. The DAB had expressed concern about Thieu's feelings toward them and were apprehensive on two accounts: (A) that he might take some reprisals against them; and (B) that he might attempt to fill up the government with Dai Viet members. I recalled to Bui Diem that Ky had twice given me definite assurances, and as late as three days before, that the members of the DAB would vote for validation and that I need have no cause for concern. I was, therefore, relying on him. I told Bui Diem of the blackmail attempt on the part of Sang and Quy and their colleagues and asked him to inform Ky that if the members of the DAB persisted in their threat to vote against validation, I intended to make public this attempt at blackmail. I added that they were playing a dangerous game in carrying this right down to the wire and I wanted it understood that they could not play fast and loose with us. I said that if Ky thought Thieu should talk to members of the DAB, he should say so to Thieu himself, but that I would undertake to see Thieu Saturday morning and urge him to get together with Ky on the problem.

4. I talked with Thieu the following morning³ and told him of Ky's concern about the attitude of DAB members, that I thought it was of critical importance that certainly a large majority of the Bloc should be lined up in support of validation and urged him to get together with Ky and the Bloc members. He promised to get in touch with Ky and did so immediately after my leaving him, and that afternoon he and Ky together met with all the DAB members. Thieu talked exceedingly well and persuasively to them. I think this may have been the turning point in lining up a substantial number in support of validation.

² September 29.

³ Reported in telegram 7291 from Saigon, September 30. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 15–1 VIET S)

5. During a meeting which took place concurrently at Independence Palace, attended by Thieu, Ky, General Cao Van Vien, Chief of the JGS, and General Khang, III Corps Commander, Khang took Ky aside and told him privately that he did not know whether Ky had allowed the validation crisis to develop for his own political advantage, but if he had then he would have only himself to blame if the situation got out of hand, and he would lose the support of the armed forces. Ky angrily denied having engineered the crisis for his own political advantage. Khang said he believed Ky and he had no evidence to the contrary, but he felt that he should let Ky know that such rumors were circulating and the military would not condone such activity. Ky's explanation to me was that he did not wish to talk with members of the DAB without Thieu's permission since if, in spite of his efforts, things should go wrong, he would not want Thieu to feel that he had doublecrossed him. I am inclined to take Ky's word and as I have previously reported, I think there is good evidence that he and Thieu are working together well.

6. Thieu kept on talking with other members of the Assembly all through Saturday and into the early hours of Sunday. All through the day Sunday, he also got in touch with individual members. The vote was taken shortly before midnight Monday,⁴ when the Assembly validated the election by a vote of 58 for, 43 against, and 5 invalid ballots. The struggle for validation, and the efforts of students and Buddhists to influence the Assembly through demonstrations, I shall touch on in greater detail in the political section.

7. Suffice it to say here that the chief result of the demonstrations was to snarl up the traffic. While the press displayed considerable interest in them, the general public attitude was manifested in distinct apathy and lack of interest. This was also true of the demonstrations in Hue and Danang. Both Thieu and Ky have expressed the view that Tri Quang and his militant Buddhists have lost a great deal of influence since the Struggle movement of 1966. Then they had the support of some elements of the armed forces, now the latter have kept completely aloof from the politics and the religious questions involved. In my view, there was nothing in any of the demonstrations to warrant what seems to me the exaggerated attention given to them by the American press, especially the UPI report that these represented the most serious disturbances in the last four years. This was certainly a fantastically exaggerated evaluation, unfortunately typical of a good deal of the reporting here.

8. I reported last week⁵ that I had transmitted to Thieu suggestions for a government program which he might incorporate in a state

⁴ October 2.

⁵ See Document 338.

of the union message at the time of the inauguration. The document is headed Democracy, Peace, and Social Justice. We have felt, however, that it is highly important that he should address the country before then with a shorter, more dynamic, hardhitting speech to arouse the enthusiasm of the people for their new government, calling for their support and outlining a program of specifics. Taking as a basis the longer document, Ambassador Locke has prepared an excellent short version.⁶ I have put this in General Thieu's hands. He has said that it has come at an opportune moment, for he wants to make such a speech at the time of the installation of the new Senate, which has now been set for Oct 12.⁷

9. While the struggle over validation of the elections has quite understandably engaged the energies and attention of Generals Thieu and Ky, they have not lost sight of the next step down the road, which is the appointment of a Prime Minister and designation of a Cabinet to work with the new National Assembly. On Sept 30, when I saw Thieu he told me that he and Ky have agreed that the Prime Minister will be Nguyen Van Loc, Chairman of the People's Army Council, a lawyer, and essentially Ky's nominee. Loc is rather colorless in personality, a considerable contrast with Ky. However, he has been active on the Board of the Bar Association, has a good reputation, and is well and favorably disposed to the United States. It was also announced officially on Oct 2 that General Nguyen Duc Thang, former Minister of Revolutionary Development, has been named Deputy Chief of Staff of the Joint General Staff, with responsibility for the regional VNND popular forces. General Nguyen Bao Tri, Minister of Information, will temporarily fill in for General Thang in the Ministry of Revolutionary Development until a permanent replacement is named.

10. Thieu said this morning that he and General Ky have prepared a list of names of the most competent available people whom they hope to include in the Cabinet. He remarked that unfortunately competence is in short supply and it was not a very large list.

11. I have reported previously that Thieu has three times offered the post of Prime Minister to Tran Van Huong, and that Huong each time has declined. He now proposes to offer Huong a post in the Inspectorate (the Consitution provides that one-third of the members be appointed by the executive and one-third each by the Senate and lower

⁶ The longer text was sent to Washington in telegram 7153 from Saigon, October 2. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 15-1 VIET S) The shorter version was sent in telegram 7588 from Saigon, October 4. The shorter text harked back to Vietnamese traditions by comparing the GVN's program to the historical mission of earlier patriots in terms of furthering "the common objective of building a just government and social system and repelling the invader." (Ibid.)

⁷ The Senate inauguration was moved forward to October 11.

house). Thieu feels that Huong will be most prestigious member of the Inspectorate and as such it can be arranged that he be elected chairman. If Huong can be induced to accept this, I think it would be an excellent thing for the new government.

12. I believe that there is a feeling of general relief on the part of the public that the problem of validation of the elections is out of the way and that there is a spirit of hopefulness that the new government will carry on more vigorous programs in all fields, military, economic, and social, and take decisive action to end the widespread corruption. Preparations are going ahead for election of the lower house on Oct 22. Thieu expressed to me the view that there would be considerable interest in the elections in the provinces where the candidates are well known to the local population, but he expects a falling off in interest in the more sophisticated centers, especially Saigon, where he believes many people have become punchdrunk with a plethora of elections.⁸

13. In connection with our own relations with the new government, I believe that these may be more sensitive and perhaps in some ways more difficult than they have been with the present military government. During the past week, ten separate editorials dealt with the theme of American interference in Vietnamese affairs. For example, the military oriented *Tien Tuyen* newspaper replied to an article by Everett Martin appearing in the Sept 25 *Newsweek*, criticizing what it called his "brazen proposals." I imagine that we shall have to be more alert to Vietnamese pride and sensitivities and apply pressure and leverage in more subtle ways. This may require greater patience on our part, but in the end I am sure will be more productive of results.

14. In the midst of the alarms and excursions over the validation of the elections (and simultaneously with a Buddhist demonstration at the other end of the street), we dedicated our new Embassy Chancery the morning of Sept 29. It was a beautiful day with soft white clouds against a blue sky, and the brilliant sunshine that always sets the flag off so well. It is a most attractive and convenient building which has been commented on most favorably by many Vietnamese. As you intended it would be, it is a fitting symbol of our determination to stay the course in Vietnam. In my brief remarks at the ceremony, I renewed our dedication to the goals we share with the leaders and people of Vietnam: a permanent end to aggression, a just and durable peace, regional security, order, and expanding economic progress. I noted that this building stands as a symbol of our commitment to the Vietnamese people, but no less impressive are hundreds of smaller buildings,

⁸ Village elections began in April and balloting for chiefs continued into June; elections for the executive and the upper house of the National Assembly took place on September 3, and elections for the lower house on October 22.

schools, hospitals, and other structures which we have built in time of war and dedicated to the cause of peace. In his remarks, General Thieu commented on the beauty of the building and the fair prospects in the longer range for international cooperation in Southeast Asia. However, he spoke also of more immediate problems, including the need to make clear to the Communists that they face a widely-respected, sovereign government in Vietnam which will play a major part in international discussions related to Vietnam. He also spoke of the need to increase the effort being made to gradually make South Vietnam economically self-sustained.

15. General Thang Reassigned. Climaxing two months of jockeying over the vigorous General Thang's future role, he on 2 Oct formally turned over the Revolutionary Development Ministry to General Tri as caretaker till the new government is formed. Thang is taking up a newly-created JGS slot and Deputy Chief of Staff, where he will be in charge of RF and PF as well as the RD teams.

16. Bob Komer finds Thang genuinely excited about the possibilities of his new job.⁹ According to Thang, he will have much more influence than he would have had as Deputy Prime Minister. He will probably run the RF/PF (as a 300,000 man territorial security force), 30,000 RD cadre, the Political Warfare Directorate (to which all military province and district chiefs will be assigned), and the Military Security Service (which he intends to use to help clean up corruption in the provinces). I regard this as a very promising development, which will surely benefit the pacification effort by bringing the biggest local security forces under a vigorous and pacification-minded chief.

17. General Westmoreland and I are pleased with the rapport between Komer and Thang. They agree on raising the 1968 RD hamlet goals from 1,100 to more like 2,000, on raising the RD budget from three billion piasters this year to five billion, and to assigning highest pacification priorities to IV and III Corps where the people are. Thang also intends to give personal attention to selecting good province and district chiefs and then giving them special training for these difficult jobs. Now that he controls them, Thang favors gradually drawing together RF/PF and RD teams into a much larger and better-trained pacification force.

[Here follows discussion of military and economic matters.]

Bunker

⁹ According to an October 2 memorandum for the record of a September 29 meeting between Komer and Thang, "General Thang was also pleased that at the JGS he would be closer to Ambassador Komer and they could get together more often." (Memorandum for the record by Robert Montague (an aide to Komer), October 2; Center for Military History, DepCORDS/MACV Files, RD Liaison: 1967)

343. Record of Telephone Conversation Between the Executive Secretary of the Department of State (Read) and Henry A. Kissinger¹

Washington, October 4, 1967, 1 p.m.

K received in the mail this morning the typed, unsigned communication set forth below from Rome on blank white paper without letterhead.² The communication was in French, and K's verbatim translation follows:

"The position of the RDVN remains always the same. If the United States really wished to talk, let them stop first without conditions the bombardment of the territory of the RDVN.

"Starting from that position there are several eventualities:

(a) A public declaration by the Government of the United States about the cessation. This declaration could take place either before or after the cessation.

(b) An official declaration but non-public preceding the cessation of the bombardment. This declaration could be communicated by the channel K/A-M (officieusement)—not quite officially, and after this indication it can be transmitted officially by an accredited person.

(c) An end of bombardment without preceding official declaration followed by an official but not public communication of the Government of the United States.

"Eventuality (a) would represent a public declaration replying to that made on the 28th of January by M. Trinh, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the RDVN, which constitutes a solemn engagement to talk after the unconditional end of bombing. This public declaration would be followed by the transmission of an official text by an accredited person.

"Eventualities (b) and (c) reflect the propositions of M and A as they result from their understanding of their conversation in July in Hanoi with the Prime Minister. A confirmation is expected soon." (End of message)

Upon receipt K phoned M in Paris to ask two questions:

(a) Where is the handwritten original, showing Bo's interlinations? and (b) What is the precise interpretation of (b)? M said he had mailed the handwritten original from Paris yesterday (October 3) by airmail special delivery.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA. Top Secret; Nodis; Pennsylvania.

² The original French texts of both the dictated version corrected by Bo and Marcovich's corrected copy are attached to a letter from Kissinger to Read, October 30. (Ibid.)

M said everything in the message except (b) was approved word for word by Bo, and point (b) is based on M's notes of his October 3 meeting with Bo. M believes he has correctly stated Bo's views in (b) although that eventuality was reconstructed by M after the October 3 meeting. K asked M, who had not yet seen Bo today, to show formulation (b) to Bo immediately and get his views on its accuracy and meaning.³

³ According to a record of a telephone conversation between Read and Kissinger at 4:15 p.m. on October 4, Bo had confirmed the accuracy of Marcovich's draft with the exception of the phrase "solemn arrangement." Kissinger informed Marcovich that Bo's backing away from this phrase was "a serious substantive change." (Ibid.) Marcovich again met with Bo after the talk with Kissinger. Bo would not discuss his problem with the phrase "solemn arrangement." In Bo's presence, Marcovich wrote down a message to Kissinger which stated that "if the US really wants to talk it is necessary first to stop without conditions the bombing and all other acts of war against the DRV." Marcovich described the first step in such a scenario for enacting such a halt to be a message agreeing to halt the bombing through the Paris channel followed by a second message suggesting a date and site for talks. If the U.S. Government assented to this arrangement, it had to respond with a written confirmation. (Notes of Read/Kissinger Telcons, 8 p.m. and 8:30 p.m., October 4; *ibid.*)

344. Editorial Note

On October 4, 1967, President Johnson and Senator Everett Dirksen had a 6-minute telephone conversation which began at 5:33 p.m. The principal topic of conversation was Vietnam. Included were the following comments by Johnson:

President: What happens—I'll give you an illustration. Fulbright talks to Lucet, the French Ambassador—and we read a lot of this stuff that goes out—and he says that the reactionaries, and that's you and the Reagans and the Generals, have taken me over, and I'm a captive, and Eisenhower even warned against these complexes taking over a President, but that I am a warmonger and I'm really trying to get China destroyed and that the French ought to use any influence they can on me, that the country is kind of irresponsibly led and that the Fascists are taking over. Kind of the pitch that they made even [in 1964] against Goldwater.

Now, they come along then with Case, who is a brilliant, young, liberal moderate, and he says that you cannot have any confidence in leadership. That's the Communist line; that's what they put out in North Vietnam every day. They told the Canadians, who were there last week, that you got a program made in the USA and you cannot

have any confidence in the USA. That's what the Communists always say to destroy the leadership.

Then they come along then with Morton and they have him say about the same thing, a little different approach, that the President's been brainwashed by—he doesn't say reactionaries, he says Generals and industrial complexes and so forth—and that we ought to stop the bombing. Now, they are being used, all these men are, and it's hurting our country and it's hurting it very, very bad. If we're going to ask these 500,000 men to stay out there, we can't have every Senator being a General and every Senator being a Secretary of State. We either got to support them and back them up and try to carry out our program, which is not a violent one, it's not a program of retreat and it's not a program of conquest, it is a program to deter aggression which we're doing very well.

But Westmoreland came in last night to me. He's very distressed. We've got a three-page, legal size, single-line, single-spaced teletype from him and he says that he has concentrated more firepower in bombing in the last week on the DMZ and they've concentrated more on us than has ever been concentrated in any equivalent period in the history of warfare, much more than was ever poured on Berlin or Tokyo, and that his only defense of the DMZ to stop this aggression up there with the North Vietnamese trying to come in is bombing their gun positions in the DMZ. And it would just be suicide if we stopped the bombing as these idiots are talking about. When you say "Stop the bombing" you say "Kill more American Marines." That's all it means. So he is asking us to give him more bombers and to give him more to try to knock this group out that's wanted for 2 years to have a big invasion of the DMZ and he has been able to deter them and they haven't had a military victory and they're not going to get one, except they're winning one here. (Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and Dirksen, October 4, 1967, 5:33 p.m., Tape 67.14, Side A, PNO 3, and Side B, PNO 1)

345. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, October 4, 1967, 6:35 p.m.

Mr. President:

Herewith, the CIA analysis of the air campaign against lines of communication²—which I held up so you would have along with it my own view of how the problem should be posed.

In a subsequent talk with Bob McNamara, I further narrowed our differences.

As you can see from what follows, the way I put the case at the meeting yesterday is wholly consistent with the evidence of the report. The problem is that the analysis in the report is split into two arguments which are never coherently related:

- 1. We have not and cannot reduce capacity so they can't get men and supplies through to the South.
- 2. Very extensive consequences flow from our bombing of the North.

That split in analysis is why men like Dick Helms accept the report but oppose cessation of bombing. I hope that what follows is a basis for reconciling and unifying judgments within the government.

As indicated in the attached more detailed comments, the bombing campaign has achieved the following:

—At little cost in civilian casualties and at acceptable costs in our loss rates, the bombing has severely curtailed North Vietnam's industrial and agricultural production.

—Therefore, there has been a radical increase in North Vietnam's requirement for foreign aid in order to sustain her war effort and to sustain her economy at minimum levels (imports up from 2,100 metric tons per day in 1965 to 4,300 in 1967; Soviet aid up from \$100 million to \$700 million annually).

—It has required the diversion of up to 600,000 workers to defend against or counter the effects of the bombing.

—It has increased substantially the number of men and tons which must be dispatched from the North to get one man or one ton into South Vietnam. We don't know just how much but we do know that

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Walt Rostow, Bombing. Top Secret. The notation "L" on the memorandum indicates that the President saw it.

² Not printed; it is an intelligence memorandum entitled "Rolling Thunder: The 1967 Campaign Against the LOC's," undated, which concluded: "Transport operations have been seriously disrupted, losses of transport equipment have increased sharply, and the costs and difficulties of maintaining traffic movements have multiplied. But as a result of countermeasures, the use of alternate routes, and foreign assistance, North Vietnam's logistic capabilities have not been reduced, and there is convincing evidence that the military and economic goods needed to support the war have continued to move." Another copy is *ibid.*, Country File, Vietnam, 3H(2) Appraisal of Bombing.

it has (1) caused them to resort to the shorter routes across the DMZ and (2) contributed to their abandoning large-scale operations within South Vietnam.

Although I have some personal reservations on whether the North Vietnamese could, if they wished, do as much more as the analysis indicates, I basically agree that bombing cannot reduce their capacity to support the South to the extent that they would be forced to abandon the war in the South.

There remain two significant, but unanswerable, questions:

—Is the present level of communist effort in the South what they consider their optimum strategy or is it the best they can or are willing to mount in the face of the bombing?

—What would they do if we stopped bombing?

Although we can't predict what the North Vietnamese would do, we can say that:

—They would be able to put men and supplies into the South at lower cost.

—The resources available to them would be increased, which would enable them to put more into the South or make life in the North easier, or both.

—It would be a lot easier for them to sweat out the war.

Walt

346. Notes of Meeting¹

Washington, October 4, 1967, 7:02–7:55 p.m.

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH SECRETARY McNAMARA SECRETARY RUSK WALT ROSTOW GEORGE CHRISTIAN

The President: I received a report this afternoon from two Congressmen that will make every man proud who has served in the Air Force. The Congressmen said they talked with some Air Force per-

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings. Top Secret; Eyes Only. The meeting was held in the Cabinet Room.

sonnel in Vietnam who said they would rather build than destroy.² Have any of you talked with Percy about his resolution?³

Secretary McNamara and Walt Rostow said they had discussed his resolution, pointing out the flaws in it.

Secretary McNamara: The strongest argument we have for our presence in South Vietnam is that the other nations in that area want us there.

The President: I told Senator Dirksen today that we do not want to supplant South Vietnam but we do want to support it. I told him that I want him to go out there and look at it from stem to stern.

Secretary McNamara: Percy has a nasty resolution, but he says he wants to help us. He is saying that the Johnson Administration will not listen to him.

The President: Tell Percy that we will listen to him at any time and any place. There certainly is not any doubt about our willingness to have him heard. What do you say now about Bo?

Secretary Rusk: We received two messages today.⁴ We ought not to hurry. We need our scenario. It's best to do it on a steady basis.

We should keep the dialogue going and not let the matter come to a head quickly.

We ought to get M & A out on this. We need for Kissinger to see Bo on procedural matters.

An unconditional suspension was mentioned. I do not think it means they are changing from a position of permanent cessation to a different position, however.

A crucial phrase was withdrawn from the second message. They took out "solemn engagement to talk" after cessation of bombing. They are still weaseling on us.

The President: In view of that, why don't we leave the circle around Hanoi but clear up everything short of Hanoi. We need to get our target list down to the lowest level possible.

I know this bombing must be hurting them. Despite any reports to the contrary, I can feel it in my bones. The guns are not silent on the DMZ tonight because of anything due to the bombing damage. We need to pour the steel on. Let's hit them every day and go every place except Hanoi.

I want you to get me in shape to make a decision when I can.

² Representatives Lester Wolf (D-NY) and Richard McCarthy (D-NY) had just returned from observing the elections in Vietnam. The President met with them from 6:22 to 6:50 p.m. (Ibid.)

³ Senator Percy introduced Senate Resolution 173 which called for the President to request a greater contribution to the war effort from the non-Communist nations of Asia. For text, see *Congressional Record*, vol. 113, p. 28038.

⁴ See Document 343 and footnote 3 thereto.

Secretary McNamara: There are 24 targets remaining. I believe they hit five of them last night, which would get this down to 19. About half of these are in Hanoi and about half in Haiphong.

The President: What are the reasons for not hitting these?

Secretary McNamara: The basic argument in Hanoi is that the strikes would result in very high civilian casualties. The basic argument in Haiphong is the fear of hitting Soviet ships.

As far as the Bo–Kissinger discussions, Kissinger said to Bo through the two agents (M & A) that we would stop the bombing if they would talk. We said that we assumed they would not take military advantage of that halt.

Bo came back with two points:

- (1) He seems to be anxious to have the contacts continue.
- (2) He stops short of a flat commitment to talk.

Mr. Rostow: In their first message he said if you stop the bombing without conditions, we undertake a solemn pledge to talk. We do not have exact text of what Bo said. It is due to arrive in the mail. All we have is M's report.

Secretary McNamara: As I understand it, if we stop the bombing without conditions, the commitment is a solemn engagement to talk at the end of bombing.

Secretary Rusk: I said earlier that could be "prompt."

The President: Now I need to get all of this straight. What are they saying exactly? Is this it: We would stop the bombing if prompt and productive discussions began, assuming they would not take military advantage of it?

Secretary McNamara: Bo has not said anything very clearly.

(Secretary McNamara then showed the President exactly what Bo had said in the memos.)

The President: Well, where does that leave us now?

Secretary Rusk: What we delayed this meeting for, from 6:30 until 7, has not come in yet. We expect it any time.

The President: I'm not as encouraged by all of this as you all are.

Secretary McNamara: This isn't that simple. I could ask a thousand questions about each word they have used in these communications.

Secretary Rusk: They have used the words stop—cessation—and end. If you look these up in the dictionary all of these mean permanent.

Secretary McNamara: Yes, we may have to state the bombing halt as permanent in the public pronouncements to meet their conditions.

However, we have gained a very clear understanding that they want to keep talks going.

The President: Who exactly are M & A? They aren't our people, are they?

Secretary Rusk: No, A is a scientist; M is a Communist.

Secretary McNamara: Kissinger has been a very shrewd negotiator. He is the best I've seen in my seven years.

The President: Where is he today?

Mr. Rostow: Kissinger is in Boston.

The President: As I understand it, Bob, we now have twenty-four targets that are unauthorized. What percentage do these represent?

Secretary McNamara: Well, let me give you a few statistics:

—There are 9,000 targets in the bombing encyclopedia.

—5,000 of these are military targets.

—Many of these are worthless.

—1700 of these have been hit.

—The JCS consider 400 to 600, presently 412, as "important fixed targets."

—There are only 24 of these 412 not authorized (that is 5.8%)

—Nine of these targets are in the Haiphong area and about 15 in Hanoi.

The President: Hit all you can.

Secretary McNamara: You will never get it down to zero.

The President: I want the Defense Department to get its very best military information and make it available to the senior staff at the State Department. Likewise, I want the very best State Department information provided to the best people at the Department of Defense so that everybody knows what we are doing and what they should be saying. I am getting very good reaction from General Walt's speeches. We need to get more men around doing this.

Secretary McNamara: We must be very careful not to pressure the military to take on political tasks.

The President: Scotty Reston⁵ is doing a story on disloyalty in government. He says that disloyalty to a President has never been higher—not even President Lincoln—to senior government personnel. Once Reston writes that article, that is the line that many of the columnists and commentators are going to take.

If you want to oppose the President, that's O.K. but do not say he lied to anybody. I do not have several policies on Vietnam. If you look at the history of the decisions on Vietnam you will find that we have been consistent.

⁵ James "Scotty" Reston was a nationally-syndicated columnist.

In any case this story has a theme that there is disloyalty in the highest ranks. It seems to make reference to the *Newsweek* story talking about various Cabinet members spreading anti-administration information around town.

We have got to sell our product to the American people. I want to counter these arguments about the South Vietnamese not fighting, about the value of an enclave theory, and about the pay-off to stopping the bombing.

As George Christian told me last night, and Christian is not a man to overstate anything, it is pathetic to see how well we agree in these meetings and our story does not get out because of what your people at the State Department and your people in the Defense Department are doing to you.

I do not want to change Zorthian unless you think he should be changed. Some of our people have been saying that he is rather cynical on our position.

Secretary Rusk: My press people tell me he has the complete faith of the press people in Vietnam.

Mr. Rostow: If I may, I have two sources who advise me that Zorthian has very bad relations with MACV. As some source of confirmation for press cynicism, I have heard this from two good sources. He has two big jobs.

The President: I understand he may not be handling the psychological warfare end of it very well. I am told he spends too much time on himself and not enough time helping Secretary McNamara and Secretary Rusk and the President. I've never known a press man yet who was any good when he built himself more than he did the President. We need press officers who say yes, I am protecting the President and my government. I want to see it do well and I am going to do everything I can to accomplish that objective.

We need an imaginative new man out there for the psychological warfare end of it. We need a good hard reporter to put out the news.

In any case let's analyze every argument that is being made against our current position and have the answers.

347. Memorandum From the Deputy for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (Komer) to President Johnson¹

Saigon, October 4, 1967.

Dear Mr. President:

Herewith, at your request, my urgent and literally eyes only assessment of what more we can do to "accelerate" the war. I suspect you are aware why, despite your earlier invitation, I've been reluctant to write directly. Westy and Bob McNamara are rightly sensitive on such matters. Besides, I feel that I can best serve you out here by producing results rather than reports.

To put things in context, let me say first that what I've seen in the last five months reinforces my long-held view that at long last we're forging ahead in Vietnam. Neither the trouble along the DMZ (where the poor Marines provide the shield behind which we're gradually cleaning up the rest of SVN) nor the perennial teapot "crises" in Saigon should be allowed to obscure this fact. Southern VC strength keeps declining, and Hanoi seems unable to replace it with sufficient NVA. So as more US troops arrive—and ARVN gets both bigger and gradually better—the force ratios are changing steadily in our favor. Our combat effectiveness is increasing too, as his declines. This shows not only in 1967's better kill and weapons ratios, but in a hundred little ways throughout the countryside. The whole trouble with analyzing this peculiar war is that it is so fragmented—so much a matter of little things happening everywhere—that the results are barely visible to the untrained eye. Also, enough things go wrong each week (and get sedulously reported) to obscure the larger number that go right.

Nor am I alone any longer in my optimism. Intelligence officers are by nature conservative, but Westy's new J-2 General Davidson (now here five months too) is equally convinced that we're grinding the enemy down much more rapidly than he can recoup.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Walt Rostow, Komer, Robert W. Secret; Eyes Only. According to an attached October 4 letter from Komer to Rostow, Komer wrote separate letters to the President and to Rostow in response to a September 23 request from Rostow for Komer's views. In his letter to Rostow, Komer wrote: "There is no new way to end the war. Nor can one guarantee definitive results in 1968. But I am more than ever convinced that by pushing harder along the present lines we can at least show gathering success by July 1968 at the latest. To the trained eye, this picture is already visible." (Ibid.) Both of these letters were sent to the President under cover of a memorandum from Rostow, October 10, which reads: "At your instruction, I evoked these two letters from Bob Komer on a strictly private basis. You will find them worth reading." (Ibid.) A notation on the covering memorandum indicates that the President saw both letters.

I could expand on this for pages, but will cite only one key equation. Through 1965 this was a VC war, fought most intensely in the Delta. There were only about 10,000 NVA down here. Today it is more and more an NVA war, fought mostly in I Corps at the opposite end of the country. Today almost half the organized enemy units are *North Vietnamese regular army*. Since the Americans arrived, Hanoi has had to feed in ever more NVA to compensate for growing VC losses. *But for many reasons Hanoi has been unable to maintain more than about 50–60,000 men in the South.* We now think VC/NVA “main force” strength peaked out last November, and has declined somewhat since (from 126,000 to 117,000). VC guerilla strength has almost surely dropped much more. Thus, while McNamara is right that we can’t stop NVA infiltration, *somehow we have been able to clamp a sort of ceiling on Hanoi’s ability to replace VC/NVA losses in the South.*

A major reason, though no one can prove how major, is the bombing of the northern transport routes from the Chinese frontier right down through Laos. Another is the way we’ve forced Hanoi to shift from the easy seaborne supply route to the much more difficult overland one.

Hanoi’s emerging strategy in South Vietnam also tends to validate my thesis. We out here see an evolving pattern of VC/NVA generally evading contact in most areas but northern I Corps, and partly breaking up into company-sized units in III and IV Corps. This ties in to Giap’s 14–16 September articles which seemingly call for a *protracted struggle*, i.e. maintaining enough of a threat-in-being in the South to deprive us of early success. “Preserving our force” is Giap’s new theme. All this suggests that Hanoi thinks its best bet is to wait us out through 1968. This would be all the more tolerable if he could get us to quit bombing the North.

Nevertheless, if we get our reinforcements and keep up pressure on the North, I am more convinced than ever that by mid-1968 at the latest it will be clear to everyone that we are “winning” the military war. We’ll show solid progress in pacifying too. This is even harder to demonstrate convincingly, being even more fragmented than the big unit war. But you can depend on it.

With the election validated, I also foresee a period of *relative* political stability. At least we should do better than the last two months of political jockeying and electioneering. The real problem now is less one of stability than of getting Thieu off his duff and *doing* enough to convey a sense of GVN movement.

Now for what more we can do to frustrate Hanoi. Even though we are on the right track at long last, pushing yet harder on certain fronts would maximize our chances of early visible results:

A. *Improving ARVN even more.* Westy is now really hot on this. He’s well aware that he’s probably getting his last major US rein-

forcements. So he has Abrams full time on ARVN. He'll produce a better ARVN, but the next step must be to get all of it out fighting more. So keep prodding us. One good theme is how high US casualties are in proportion to ARVN/RF/PF. You might personally write not only Westy but Thieu as well. At a guess, we could get 25% better ARVN results in six months if we really went all-out.

B. *Get some more ROKs and Aussies.* Even one more ROK brigade and Anzac battalion could make a significant difference *if we could get them soonest*. Given the lead time needed, why not hit Pak and Holt² personally right now?

C. *DOD slowness.* I'm appalled by the slow response time of the US military machine—not the time it takes to train and ship troops or buy and ship equipment but the interminable decision-making process. For example, we're still waiting for final Defense OK on US military advisors that McNamara approved in July. The justification and re-justification process MACV must go through—with CINCPAC, the Services, and finally DOD level—may save money but doesn't help win wars quickly. Protect me on this as Bob McNamara will shrewdly suspect whence it comes, but Bob himself may not realize how long it takes—and how many man hours—to get even piddling requests approved.

D. *Don't stop bombing the North—even for Tet.* No one can prove it conclusively, but I am flatly convinced that the bombing helps greatly in keeping a lid on NVA ability to fight in the South. We need it for at least another six months—without the pauses which Hanoi utilizes so well. Why not get it ratified by the next Summit? A strong US declaration that we intend to keep bombing till Hanoi stops infiltrating would also clear the air (and maybe even cause some critics to lay off agitating the issue as futile).

E. *Do more about Cambodia and Laos.* Bunker and Westy make great sense on small ARVN raids into Laos, especially since the barrier seems to be delayed. When you see Souvanna, just convince him we're winning and he'll be a lot less edgy. As for Cambodia, State has been fudging for a year even on a psywar campaign to clue Sihanouk that we're on to him—and that he's foolish because we're winning. State will plead not guilty, but ask what they've done in a year. We might also use a little carrot and stick on Sihanouk—promises of goodies if he behaves better plus a few steps to worry him (such as *delays* on Mekong convoys). Only if *you* prod on this will we get anywhere. And I'm not advocating high-risk enterprises—simply enough action to help minimize enemy use of these invaluable sanctuaries.

² President Park (Pak) Chung Hee of the Republic of Korea and Prime Minister Harold Holt of Australia.

F. *Last but not least, exert much greater pressure on GVN to perform.* Now that Thieu is solidly in the saddle—legally too—his passivity is our greatest obstacle. Thieu is no Ky. So if a bright, shiny new-model GVN is essential to attract the people, we have to work a lot harder at it than before. Bunker is superb (a great choice on your part), but needs more personal backing of the sort I used to draft for you to send Lodge. I know you'll take Thieu up on a mountain at the Summit, but a few private messages beforehand would help mightily. Thieu needs a dynamic program, top quality cabinet, and above all a little decisiveness. I'd almost say categorically that the GVN will do almost nothing into which we don't push it. Hence I'm breaking eggs out here (and may get in trouble because of it), but it's the only way to get reasonably prompt results.³

Walt says you also want my views on Abrams.⁴ From what he says there may be some concern lest Westy lacks "military imagination in pressing forward to get definitive results." I now feel able to size both up, having lived with them. Both are exceptional generals—either could in my judgment complete the job of grinding down the VC/NVA. Their styles are quite different, and Abe is a bit in Westy's shadow. He's more direct and less prideful than Westy. Once Abe made up his mind, he would doggedly work away at the goals he's set.

But I don't see Abe as any more dynamic than Westy, and certainly no more imaginative militarily—in fact probably less so. Indeed, he doesn't seem quite as flexible as Westy in adjusting to changing situations. Equally important, Westy has an intimate relationship with the ARVN leadership that I doubt Abe could duplicate. In a way, they respond better to a MacArthur type than to a solid no-nonsense soldier. Westy may coddle ARVN too much, but he really runs them more and more behind the scenes. Also, while Abe would be every bit as responsive to "political" guidance as Westy, he strikes me as more narrowly professional and likely to show less skill in dealing with the ARVN generals on political matters than Westy. Bunker now relies on Westy a lot to help out in this field, and rightly so. Lastly, Westy's experience seems to me invaluable. With Abe and me here now, Westy's less tired than he was and better able to focus on the big issues. In sum, he still nets out to me as *the best man for this particular job*, even on grounds of flexibility and imagination. But Abrams could unquestionably do the job well too.

All this is in haste, because Walt said to reply quite urgently. I won't attempt to polish my rambling prose, and will follow up later

³ Komer added a handwritten marginal note next to this paragraph which reads: "This is critical, Mr. President. RWK."

⁴ General Creighton W. Abrams, Deputy Commander, MACV.

with any more ideas. You can depend on my candor as always, despite the dangers.

Respectfully,

R. W. Komer

348. Notes of Meeting¹

Washington, October 5, 1967, 6:55–8:25 p.m.

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING
WITH
SECRETARY McNAMARA
SECRETARY RUSK
WALT ROSTOW

Secretary Rusk: Bill Bundy will see Kissinger in Boston Friday.² We propose to transmit the complete text of this message (a copy of which only the President, Secretary Rusk and Secretary McNamara had in their possession). This will be a message from Kissinger to Bo.³

The President: It appears to me that we delete our assumption in here; if they attack us during the talks what would happen?

Secretary McNamara: We would open fire, of course.

The President: Wouldn't that be acting in bad faith if we do not state it in plain terms in this message that we assume they will not take advantage of the bombing cessation?

Secretary Rusk: If major operations began against us, we would be justified in striking back.

The President: I think it is important we know what we are saying, and they know what we are saying. For example, what does "cessation" mean?

Secretary Rusk: It is deliberately ambiguous.

The President: Is the only real danger to us at the DMZ?

Secretary McNamara: No, there are some dangers elsewhere.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings. Top Secret; Eyes Only. The meeting was held in the President's office.

² October 6.

³ See Document 349.

The President: But if they do open up, we will be able to fire back?

Secretary McNamara: Yes, we would be well justified in the eyes of the world to resume bombing if they did that.

Secretary Rusk: Asked for a copy of the San Antonio speech.⁴ The Secretary said it is a question of how precise we should be in the language of this.

The President: It still looks to me like you take out my assumption. I propose you delete the phrase “without the expression of conditions.” What I want to know is that I will stop the bombing and enter negotiations which are prompt and productive. We have always assumed that they would not take advantage of the bombing. Let’s not let them say that we have retracted our assumption.

This proposal may lead them to a meeting, but it may lead me into a trap.

Secretary McNamara: They have not contracted not to take advantage of the pause. In other words talks could go on while the level of current fighting continues—just so long as they do not increase it.

Secretary Rusk: They can come back after this message and debate anything they want to.

Mr. Rostow: None of us believe that the private assumption is forgotten.

The President: I know I will be charged with bad faith if they enter talks then begin firing at us. I must respond. I don’t think this message gives me room to respond.

Secretary McNamara: Nothing says they cannot shell our troops at the present level, it’s just that they cannot shell them at an increased level.

The President: I want talks which I can depend on. I think they would be taking advantage of it if they shell on the DMZ.

Secretary Rusk: Then I propose that we insert in the first paragraph “the U.S. government is prepared, in accordance with its proposal of August 25 . . .”

The President: If we cannot agree among ourselves we sure cannot get them to agree.

Mr. Rostow: I would prefer to have it expressly stated in the agreement.

Secretary Rusk: I think the matter is taken care of by inserting “in accordance with our position of August 25.” Our proposal of August

⁴ See Document 340.

25 would incorporate the assumption that they would not take advantage of the bombing cessation.⁵

Secretary McNamara: I would agree with that, leaving in the phrase, “without expression of conditions.”

Secretary Rusk: If they are not enticed by this, we do not see this (the bombing cessation) coming before the first week before November. So we have some time here to work with.

In the face of the August 25 proposal, Bo seems very anxious to keep the channel open. I do not believe Hanoi is doing this just for the fun of it.

The President: Well, they have escaped the bombing in Hanoi just because two professors are meeting. August 23 is the last time Hanoi was hit. Does that message (referring to the proposed message which was to be transmitted from Kissinger to Bo) include the halt of the August 25 assumption?

Secretary Rusk: It takes in the full proposal by saying “in accordance with.”

The President: What if we sat down in Paris on Monday and they began shelling?

Secretary McNamara: You can shoot back or bomb in the vicinity of the DMZ if they shell us.

The President: Then we are trading all bombing for talks but we would expect to take any action necessary if they begin to shell us in the DMZ.

How long would it take? What if they re-arm, re-equip, or re-fortify?

Secretary Rusk: It would be just like another pause unless it turns into peace.

We will know within two weeks if they are beginning a major re-supply effort. The first thing we should demand if we get to negotiate is for the complete demilitarization of the DMZ. Remember, the bombing in Laos would continue.

The President: Rivers came down here this morning and gave me a report in which he said we have got to “give them everything we’ve got.” He said in the last pause we permitted re-supply which cost many U.S. lives.

Secretary McNamara: There is just not one piece of evidence which would substantiate that, Mr. President.

⁵ See footnote 4, Document 293.

Secretary Rusk: But we will have a problem of how to handle our own people.

Secretary McNamara: If you think you've got problems, you can imagine what sort of problems I will have with the military. All we can point to is the silence along the DMZ.

The President: What do you think is responsible for the silence there tonight?

Secretary McNamara: I believe it is a combination of artillery and the B-52s, but principally the artillery is responsible.

Mr. Rostow: But the B-52s laid down a very good carpet.

Secretary McNamara: Artillery is more effective.

Secretary Rusk: The effect of the B-52s on morale is very direct.

The President: What would General Wheeler say about all this?

Secretary McNamara: I believe he would be for it if no military advantage were taken.

The President: Have you discussed it with him?

Secretary McNamara: No, with his physical condition I would not think it wise.

The President: Well, I'm for stopping the bombing but I want them to know that we can get back into position if we need to.

Secretary Rusk: We'll shoot back if they shoot at us.

Mr. Rostow: I do not think we are dealing with children. They want one of four things:

- (1) An umbrella under which to rebuild
- (2) Peace and quiet in Hanoi for awhile
- (3) Panmunjom-like discussions
- (4) They really want peace in line with their earlier communication.

The President: We must put them on notice that the assumption still holds.

Secretary McNamara: But I would leave in "without expression of condition" because they want no conditions.

Secretary Rusk: I think it should stay in, too.

The President: I guess that is because it makes it a little more appealing to them.

Secretary Rusk: We should go at this thing on a day to day basis. We might have an announcement that there was no air activity over the North today and repeat the same thing for several days without getting ourselves into a bind.

The President: Bob, would you talk to General Wheeler about this? I want to get Wheeler aboard. On the last pause, he did not favor it but he was willing to defend the decision.

Secretary McNamara: I will talk to him first thing in the morning.

The President: Otherwise, I am a man without a country.

Secretary Rusk: I just want everybody to know that my sniffer doesn't smell peace yet.

The President: This is going to be much worse in terms of the pressure on us than the 37-day pause.

Secretary McNamara: Yes, much worse.

The President: I honestly do not see how Senator Dirksen, at 72, from Chicago, can stand up and be my defender the way he has been.

Secretary Rusk: He has a little stronger chemical in his system than others.

The President: Quoted parts of the James MacGregor Burns book on Kennedy's quotes about the toughness of the times ahead.⁶

The President read his speech which is scheduled for Saturday night at a Salute to the President in Washington.

Secretary McNamara: Left before the speech was concluded because of another engagement.

Secretary Rusk: Said he thought it was an outstanding speech.

Secretary Rusk: Federal troops are making major headway in Nigeria.

Mr. Rostow: When should Senator Dirksen and Senator Mansfield be told about this track?

The President: Not until we have something.

Secretary Rusk: We do not know if we have anything yet.

Mr. Rostow: We are coming to a stage when we can begin to put the war to the American people in a new way.

We have achieved self-determination in South Vietnam. We have pushed the North Vietnamese into the North. There are no more interior bases in South Vietnam.

What we need to do is to stop the second war now. This is the war in the North. This is a need for the infiltration to stop. This is a second job.

We can split up the war into two pieces and give the war a new look by building up a new informational program.

The President: Speaking of information programs, we killed ourselves today with that announcement that we had 100,000 casualties. Why didn't they say 80,000 were returned to duty? I have been trying to get the correct figures out for a long time.

⁶ *Government by the People: The Dynamics of American National Government* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: 1966).

Secretary Rusk: Do you have any speech information on Rockefeller's⁷ position?

The President: No. I think you (Secretary Rusk) should make a series of speeches and talk about "the birth of a nation" and the five elections that have been held in Vietnam this year. We should talk about Honolulu, when we asked them to draft a constitution; we should talk about Manila, when we asked them to elect a President; we should talk about Guam, when Ky and Thieu gave us their constitution; we should talk about the election of a Constitutional Assembly; and finally, we should talk about Thieu and Ky's election.

We should make speeches about the new government out there, and should show what has happened in your period as Secretary of State.

We need to get a program on speeches.

Mr. Rostow: State is working with Harold Kaplan⁸ on this matter. We believe the Inaugural will be a turning point.

⁷ Nelson Rockefeller, Governor of New York and a leading contender for the Republican Party's Presidential nomination in 1968.

⁸ Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs.

349. Editorial Note

The next round in the indirect probe of the North Vietnamese Government known as Pennsylvania consisted of a response to statements made by Hanoi's representative in Paris, Mai Van Bo. According to telegram 49772 to Paris, October 6, 1967, Henry Kissinger planned to telephone from Boston his intermediary in France, Herbert Marcovich, and alert him to receive the message for Bo at the house of a U.S. diplomat in Paris. The text of the note, which was transmitted in the telegram, read:

"The United States Government understands the position of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam to be as follows: That upon the cessation by the United States of all forms of bombardment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, without expression of condition, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam would enter promptly into productive discussions with the United States. The purpose of these discussions would be to resolve the issues between the United States and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Assuming the correctness of this under-

standing of the position of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the United States Government is prepared, in accordance with its proposal of August 25, to transmit in advance to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam the precise date upon which bombardment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam would cease and to suggest a date and a place for the commencement of discussions."

In addition, Marcovich was to add four points orally: this understanding was "consistent" with prior statements by both sides, Kissinger would have authority to discuss the times of the cessation and the venue for discussions, the administration requested a comment from the North Vietnamese Government with respect to secrecy in any resultant discussions, and since the U.S. Government had noted the reduction of Communist military activities around the demilitarized zone, it was suggested that the North Vietnamese Government note that bombing had not occurred around Hanoi for several weeks. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA)

In a telephone conversation with Benjamin Read at 9:30 a.m. on October 8, Kissinger reported on the meeting of Marcovich and his compatriot Raymond Aubrac with Bo on October 8 at 9 a.m. in Paris. After receiving Kissinger's message, Bo promised to utilize the Pennsylvania channel if any reply was necessary. However, he characterized the message as conditional, especially the use of the words "prompt" and "productive" as well as the phrase "in accordance with the proposal of August 25," and labeled it as the "usual American double game." (Memorandum of telephone conversation; Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Pennsylvania) A notation on an October 9 covering memorandum from Rostow transmitting this memorandum to the President indicates that he saw the record of the conversations. (Ibid.)

After hearing from Kissinger, Read discussed Bo's response to the message with Secretary Rusk, Under Secretary Katzenbach, Walt Rostow, and Secretary McNamara. An unattributed and undated note written after this discussion indicates that the senior advisers were not surprised by Bo's reaction. "He is making all the obvious points he knows his government would make and holding open all options," Read reported he had told Kissinger. Kissinger was directed to inform Marcovich that the message "represents an entirely reasonable suggestion for ending the bombing and moving forward to discussions resolving US/DRV differences"; the North Vietnamese Government had up to this point failed to adequately respond; and Kissinger might return to Paris by the end of the week depending on what type of response Marcovich received from Bo. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA)

The next day, October 9, Marcovich again saw Bo. At that meeting, described in a telephone conversation between Kissinger and Read on October 9, Marcovich tried to impress upon a recalcitrant Bo the fact that for the first time the U.S. Government had offered to set a specific date for a cessation. Any response from the U.S. Government would be determined by the nature of the reaction from Bo and his government. Bo noted that he was available to meet with Kissinger if he came to Paris during the ensuing weekend. In addition, Bo seemingly confirmed Pham Van Dong's statement of July 26 intimating a brief interval between the end of bombing and the beginning of peace talks by responding: "He who does not say 'no', agrees." (Undated summary of a telephone conversation between Kissinger and Read of October 9, noon; Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Pennsylvania) A covering memorandum from Rostow transmitting a copy of the record of the telephone conversation to the President on October 9 at 1:55 p.m., which bears a notation indicating that the President saw the record, reads: "Our intermediaries M and A are like a couple of Mexican jumping beans. I wish they would sit still for a bit." (Ibid.)

In subsequent telephone conversations with Read over the next 2 days, Kissinger acknowledged that he had refused Marcovich's prodding to come to Paris "in order to maximize pressures on Bo to get something back through the channel." Kissinger would only return to Paris when the North Vietnamese had clearly failed to respond; until that time, he had advised Marcovich that the U.S. Government "has nothing further to say." (Undated summary of telephone conversations between Kissinger and Read of October 10 and October 11; *ibid.*) The summaries of these telephone conversations are printed in part in Herring, *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pages 761–766.

350. Memorandum From the Deputy Director for Coordination, Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Truehart) to the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Hughes)¹

Washington, October 9, 1967.

SUBJECT

Developments in Operations Against Viet-Nam²

Maritime Operations

Although slowed down somewhat by bad weather recently, maritime operations against North Vietnam have averaged between 10 and 15 completed missions per month since mid-summer. Eight to ten junks have been destroyed and from 20 to 25 captives taken south for interrogation monthly.

Missions involving putting teams ashore to take prisoners for interrogation, to collect operational intelligence, or to harass the enemy have been scheduled more frequently recently. While several have been completed successfully, their intelligence value is low. Now scheduled are over-the-beach missions against Tiger Island to see if US airmen are held prisoner there and against the Dong Hoi area to assess the effectiveness of Mark 36 destructor mines sown there by air.

New enemy defensive tactics against the PTF³ missions have recently come to light through prisoner interrogation and through observation during missions. A "suicide" junk with TNT charges in its stern was blown up by its crew when a PTF came alongside. Fortunately, a crewman put aboard the junk by the PTF survived and the PTF itself was undamaged. The junk was destroyed along with most of its crew. Interrogation of captives from other junks has revealed that

¹ Source: Department of State, INR/IL Historical Files, EAP Files, Far East Weekly Meetings. Top Secret.

² On September 1 Helms sent Rostow a memorandum entitled "U.S. Foreign Intelligence and Related Activities in Selected Areas of Southeast Asia and the Far East." An attachment to the memorandum detailed intelligence collection activities over the past 6 months against North Vietnam by both the Central Intelligence Agency and the Department of Defense. The methods employed included [text not declassified], extraction of information from North Vietnamese diplomats abroad, interrogations of captured prisoners inside South Vietnam, and the use of insertion teams. A general increase in the quality of intelligence on North Vietnam and its intentions was noted, with the most important result being improved assessment of the damage inflicted upon North Vietnam by U.S. bombing. (Central Intelligence Agency, Executive Registry Subject Files, Job 80-R01580R, PFIAB #14)

³ Fast "PT" (patrol) boats.

several junks have been equipped for suicide missions, although there has been difficulty persuading fishermen to volunteer as crewmen.

Sampanns are now serving in several areas as range markers for enemy coastal batteries. When PTF's come within a certain distance, these craft drop their sails and bombardment of the PTF's begins. These tactics, while unsuccessful in causing PTF casualties, are nonetheless effective in driving PTF's farther out to sea.

Many enemy craft, at the approach of PTF's, head for shallow water in which the PTF's cannot maneuver. To counter this tactic, the PTF's will soon begin to carry Boston whalers equipped with outboard motors. The whalers will be launched in shallow water to allow the pursuit of sampans which run for the coast.

PTF's are now given air cap on their infrequent missions north of 20°, while carrier task force picket stations conduct air searches before all missions. Over-the-beach missions are coordinated with the carrier task force to ensure that there will be no coincidental illumination of the PTF operational area by flare ships.

In-place Teams

There are now six in-place teams and three singleton agents in North Vietnam. During September two of the singletons were parachuted into enemy territory and one team was dropped from the list after confirmation (through Hanoi radio) of its capture by the enemy. One of the six teams [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] still carried as active is suspected of being "doubled" and it is planned to parachute another team into the same vicinity under cover of a resupply drop to ascertain the status of [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*]. The captain of the team to be infiltrated is acquainted by sight with all members of [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*]. [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] was instructed to walk out to Laos last March for helicopter pickup but has found a number of reasons for delay. The present plan takes the place of a proposal, happily rejected, which would have assembled the members of [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] for a resupply drop, incapacitated them with a chemical agent, and picked them up by helicopter for return to South Vietnam. If anything went wrong, gunships were to go into action.

Of the three singleton agents now in place, one has been reporting for upwards of six years. One was recruited from the many prisoners taken from junks in the Gulf of Tonkin. An additional agent is now awaiting favorable weather for a drop into North Vietnam.

[less than 1 line of source text not declassified] Teams

One of the dozen or so trained [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] teams has recently been infiltrated into the area just north of

the DMZ and along one of the routes leading into Laos. It will remain for about 20 days, reporting on road traffic and spotting convoys for air attack by the Seventh Air Force.

[less than 1 line of source text not declassified] teams are landed in Laos by helicopter and walk into North Vietnam. At the end of their missions they are to walk out for pickup in Laos.

[less than 1 line of source text not declassified]

One [less than 1 line of source text not declassified] team was parachuted into North Vietnam along the Lao Kay–Hanoi rail line near the Chinese border in mid-September. It has not been heard from.

Radio Operations

Three black transmitters and one grey transmitter are now in operation providing respectively two, six, one, and twelve hours of programming daily. One of the black transmitters is airborne over the Gulf of Tonkin and either “ghosts” Hanoi broadcasts or repeats programs of the other transmitters. “Morale” messages from their families to in-place team members are frequently aired on one of the programs made up of messages from SVN civilians to relatives in the north.

In an average month over 30 million leaflets are dropped over North Vietnam by Op 34 aircraft. During the same period five hundred to a thousand gift kits (suited to the closest holiday) and several hundred radios would normally be distributed. Recent kits have had the fall festival as a theme and have included rice bowls.

From three to five hundred letters to individuals in North Vietnam are posted in third countries monthly.

The distribution of leaflets in North Vietnam by balloon is now being studied by the Special Operations Group. [less than 1 line of source text not declassified] has made two experts available for the development and testing of suitable techniques. It is now contemplated that the balloons will be released from US Navy ships in the Gulf of Tonkin.

351. Intelligence Memorandum¹

No. 1391/67

Washington, October 9, 1967.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF A HALT IN THE BOMBARDMENT OF
NORTH VIETNAM

Summary

If the United States were to halt the bombardment of North Vietnam, and avoided saying that it was setting a time limit on the halt, Hanoi would probably be willing to enter direct talks. It would almost certainly take a cessation of longer than a month to elicit such a response, and none would be forthcoming at all if a reciprocal gesture of de-escalation were demanded.

Hanoi makes a distinction between *talks*, private, tentative, and exploratory, and *negotiations*, the formal settlement of outstanding issues. Thus its initial response would be cautious, and would be intended at the most to open the way to "talks." The opening of "negotiations" would depend on whether the US position, as revealed in these private conversations, was sufficiently forthcoming to give Hanoi hope of eventually achieving its goals in South Vietnam.

The North Vietnamese would see a cessation of bombardment without a reciprocal gesture on their part as a sign the US will was weakening, and would be greatly encouraged to believe that the course they had been following was correct. On the other hand, they would be highly suspicious of US intent, particularly in the context of the election of 1968. They would fear that the pattern of 1954 would be repeated, that the great powers might somehow deprive them of the fruits of victory. And they would expect to feel intensified and conflicting pressures from Moscow and Peking.

These factors would tend to strengthen Hanoi's determination to press for significant concessions from the US. Thus the outlook for the

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Walt Rostow, Bombing. Secret; Sensitive. The CIA Directorate of Intelligence prepared the memorandum in response to longstanding concerns by the President relating to the consequences of a bombing halt. According to a covering note from Rostow transmitting the memorandum to the President, October 9, Johnson agreed that Rusk and McNamara should be asked to comment on the memorandum. An October 24 memorandum from Helms to Rostow summarized among other things the CIA's assessment of effects on enemy logistics. This memorandum argued that the DRV would enter into talks of a preliminary nature if the bombardment of the North did in fact cease. It further pointed out that in spite of the fact that interdiction efforts "clearly have not placed a relevant ceiling on Communist force structures or levels of combat," the North Vietnamese almost certainly would use the respite of a halt "to improve their military capabilities." The enemy could and would endeavor to reinforce its forces in the South at significantly less cost during such a cease-fire period. (Ibid., Country File, Vietnam, 3 H (2) Appraisal of Bombing)

talks developing into more serious negotiations would be poor, unless the US was willing to accept terms it has hitherto ruled out. Nevertheless, the North Vietnamese would seek to prolong the talks, because they would probably believe the political pressures for US concessions would be greater than the corresponding pressures on them. They would expect that a continued erosion of the US negotiating position, combined with continued military attrition in the South, would eventually bring the US to accept a formula for settlement favorable to Hanoi's basic aims.

To this end, Hanoi would take advantage of any halt in bombardment to improve its military capabilities. It would move to restore and harden its transportation and industry in the North, and strengthen and reorganize its logistic routes to the South. A cessation of a week would enable the North Vietnamese to mount a stockpiling effort on the scale of their operations during the Tet pause of 1967; this would only yield them a short-term tactical advantage. For any longer period their gains would be proportionally larger. By the end of a year they would have been able to set their house thoroughly in order and to make themselves much less vulnerable to any future attacks. Although the bombing of the North has not been the limiting factor on the scale of their operations in the South, they could, if they chose, provide substantial reinforcements for their forces there with less risk and disruption than they now suffer.

[Here follow six pages of detailed analysis.]

**352. Memorandum From the President's Special Counsel
(McPherson) to President Johnson¹**

Washington, October 10, 1967, 5:10 p.m.

I have been thinking about how to present our Vietnam case more convincingly. Bob McNamara thinks he and Secretary Rusk have pretty much lost their credibility on the subject, and I'm afraid I agree. I think you can reach the people with arguments such as you presented at San Antonio, but the question is, how often can you speak on the subject?

¹ Johnson Library, Office Files of Harry McPherson, Memoranda for the President, 1967. No classification marking.

Often—if the format is right. Big speeches before big audiences have occasional value, primarily for the applause that signals agreement, but

—people accustomed to the conversational tone of TV tend to “turn off” when conventional crowd-rhetoric begins, and

—big speeches require big climaxes—hard sells—that make the home TV listener uneasy.

I believe you should consider this kind of format:

a) A *regular*—either monthly or bi-monthly—television report to the people.

b) You would speak first, for five or ten minutes. Then you would introduce Ellsworth Bunker, and then General Westmoreland, who would each give a five-minute report: Bunker on political progress, Westmoreland on military progress. Occasionally this could be varied to include a soldier’s report of a combat operation, or a civilian pacification worker’s report of a village operation, or a doctor, etc.

c) The purpose would be to “de-politicize” your reports on Vietnam—to make you more of a commander-in-chief, and less of a beleaguered political figure trying to defend what is happening.

d) If it is begun now, it will be a natural event by the Fall of 1968, and hence not subject to charges of “politics.”

e) Bunker’s and Westmoreland’s reports would be filmed in Saigon, and flown here. Both theirs and yours should take a candid line, albeit hopeful. They should point out set-backs, incompleting actions, etc., as well as demonstrable progress. They must not be “snow-jobs”, or people won’t listen.

Do you think this is worth exploring?²

Harry

² The President checked the “yes” option. At the President’s request, both Westmoreland and Bunker returned to the United States in mid-November for a series of public relations appearances.

353. Notes of Meeting¹

Washington, October 16, 1967.

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH SECRETARY RUSK, SECRETARY McNAMARA, WALT ROSTOW, CIA DIRECTOR HELMS AND GEORGE CHRISTIAN

The President: Dean, I want to know all you know and think about Pennsylvania.

Secretary Rusk: We haven't seen any serious response from Hanoi. They are not in the business of talking about negotiations at this stage. It has been a one way conversation.

Bo does want contacts to continue. I do not think this is just because of the ten mile radius around Hanoi.

There is little danger now that talks will break off. M and A and Kissinger see we are not getting anything back from Hanoi.

The President: Did the State Department insist on a letter from Ashmore when he got into his discussions over there?

Secretary Rusk: They (Ashmore and Baggs) were itching to win a Nobel peace prize and wanted it.

Secretary McNamara: I agree with Dean. I do not believe Bo's interest in continuing the talks is related to the ten mile bombing restriction. There has been no proposition to talk in any way about settling the conflict.

It now becomes a question of what we do next year in relation to Pennsylvania. I expect nothing in the next two weeks. What does matter is what we do in the next 3 to 4 months.

If the President does want a pause, I would suggest that we do it through the Pennsylvania channel.

If we do not want a pause, the President may want to draw this channel to a close. Renewing the bombing will, in my opinion, bring it to a close.

Walt Rostow: I believe they will say they are prepared to talk if we unconditionally stop the bombing. As I see it, there are three alternatives:

- 1) Play the string out
- 2) Have a pause and see what happens

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings. Top Secret. This meeting is not recorded in the President's Daily Diary.

3) Go to ICC countries and tell them that we have made this offer. See if we can get assurances of the kind required.

The President: What was General Wheeler's reaction to all of this?

Secretary McNamara: General Wheeler's reaction was one of concern if we pause and the North Vietnamese take advantage of it. He is not concerned if they do not take military advantage, although he does not believe it will bring about negotiations. General Wheeler was tolerant of our views given the domestic situation we have.

The President: What damage would we suffer with a pause?

Secretary McNamara: There is a possibility we will suffer no damage. We could develop our own talk-and-fight strategy.

I would recommend a pause because of the domestic plus it would be.

Secretary Rusk: How long a pause?

Secretary McNamara: You will never have a long enough pause to satisfy Fulbright and others. A pause of at least a month would be necessary.

Secretary Rusk: I talked with Hedley Donovan of *Time-Life*. As you know, they are coming out with an editorial next week in *Life* which calls for a halt in the bombing.

Donovan thinks a lot of people will have their minds changed with a pause. We would not get much out of a short pause with international public opinion.

The President: What if they resume military operations?

Secretary McNamara: We would resume military operations if they did.

Director Helms: I do not think anything will come out of the Pennsylvania channel. It will get information back to Hanoi. But I do not expect to get anything out of it.

Secretary Rusk: The proposal we made to them was almost too reasonable.

The President: How are we ever going to win?

Secretary McNamara: We are making progress. But it is slow. I have no idea how we can win it in the next 12 months.

We have to do something to increase the support for the war in this country. I know of no better way to do it except by a pause.

The President: We may lose if we have a pause. I do not think it would change any of these folks.

Secretary Rusk: Donovan says that it would change a lot of minds.

George Christian: A short pause which failed would lead to considerably more discouragement in this country than we now have.

Secretary Rusk: What effect would it have on the morale of the men?

Secretary McNamara: The effects would be bad if supplies were brought in and infiltration continued.

Director Helms: There is no question about the domestic political reaction. You win a war by doing what you are doing. A short pause will do no good. It will be very difficult to get started back again. If we have a pause, it must be a very long, deep breath.

The President: I do not see how we can get into a long one.

Secretary McNamara: We have got to be much tougher. If they do not take advantage of the pause, it would be a plus.

Secretary Rusk: I would trade the bombing for sealing off the DMZ and some of the action in the south.

Secretary Rusk: A pause ought to be connected with a promise to do something.

The President: Can't we do something to get these troop contributions wrapped up?

Secretary McNamara: We have a crash program going to get them out there.

Secretary Rusk: We will get 15,000 more men from Korea.

We need a meeting with Ambassador Goldberg on the Middle East. We are getting into a deadlock at the United Nations. We need to be fully briefed.

Director Helms: Ambassador Goldberg asked for a whole set of facts on arm shipments into the Middle East.

The President: What about their plans for an Asian summit?

Secretary Rusk: I do not know if anything good would come of it. Perhaps a meeting of the Foreign Ministers in Seoul would set the ground work.

Walt Rostow: Australia wants the last two weeks in November or the first two weeks in December.

Secretary McNamara: I don't recommend an Asian summit at this time. What is there to accomplish?

Walt Rostow: In wake of the troop contributions, you can dramatize that the other allies are doing more of their share of the work in Vietnam. We can dramatize that the rest of them are not only talking but are doing something out there. We also could put the heat on the South Vietnamese government to get them to do more. This would unify the allies on our basic negotiating stance.

The President: Let's send everything we have on to Mr. Bunker and get his recommendations. I said to the Thais and to the Australians that we are there with you and we will stay with you, but I do not

know how long I can stay with that few men in the pot. It is good for them to think that so they want to contribute more troops. Let's leave it that way from now on.

Secretary Rusk: It is good to see the allies with troops in battle getting together to talk about their mutual problems.

The President: All of our past meetings produced more than we expected.

[Here follows discussion unrelated to Vietnam.]

354. Memorandum From McGeorge Bundy to President Johnson¹

Washington, October 17, 1967.

SUBJECT

Vietnam—October 1967

I have talked today with my brother Bill, Bob McNamara, a knowledgeable Junior interdepartmental staff team, Dick Helms, and Bromley Smith. I am going to see the Vice President, Clark Clifford and Walt Rostow before the day ends, and when we talk I can make amendments orally to the following tentative conclusions.

Basically, I think your policy is as right as ever and that the weight of the evidence from the field is encouraging. I also believe that we are in a long, slow business in which we cannot expect decisive results soon. And while I think there are several things which we can usefully do to strengthen our position, my most important preliminary conclusions are negative. Because these negative conclusions define my affirmative recommendations, I begin with them:

1. At present I would be strongly against
 - (1) any unconditional pause;
 - (2) any extended pause for the sake of appearances;
 - (3) any major headline-making intensification of the bombing—such as a renewed bombing of Hanoi;
 - (4) any large-scale reinforcement of General Westmoreland beyond the totals already agreed;

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA. Secret. In an October 20 covering note transmitting a copy to Rusk, Rostow wrote: “The President wished you to have, on a personal basis, a copy of this memorandum by Mac Bundy.” (Ibid.)

(5) any major immediate change in the public posture established by your Texas speech and recent supporting efforts by Cabinet Officers;

(6) any elaborate effort to show by new facts and figures that we are “winning.”

2. The argument which follows attempts first to spell out these conclusions in detail, and second to outline some things I *would* do now.

(1) *No unconditional pause.* The basic objection to an unconditional pause is simply that the odds are very heavy that you would have to resume, and that if the pause is truly unconditional, the circumstances of any such resumption would be very damaging to us both at home and abroad. Dean Rusk is absolutely right when he says that none of the advocates of such a pause have told us they would support a resumption, on any grounds (although Walter Lippmann acknowledged the impossibility of a permanent and unproductive pause a year ago). If we pause unconditionally, we impale ourselves on a terrible dilemma:

a. to accept continuing and visible reinforcement from the North without reply;

b. to resume on our own say-so, thus “destroying the hope of peace” by unilateral action.

(2) *No extended pause for the sake of appearances.* The argument against this kind of pause is somewhat different: it is that nothing which pretends to be a pause and has conditions attached to it is likely to have any useful effect whatever upon people like the *New York Times*. They will simply say once more that we have done it wrong, that we were insincere, and that we have proved again that we cannot be trusted by Hanoi. Since in fact Hanoi will not accept any such conditional or limited pause, we can only get the worst of both worlds by offering it. This means that any short standdown at Christmas or New Year’s should be very carefully handled to prevent a false impression that we are quietly reopening a serious pause as we did—in all good faith—in 1965–66. We should not repeat the pattern of 1966–67.

There is one and only one condition on which I would order an extended pause—it is that there should be a recorded and acknowledged diplomatic position like the one which we have been stating to Hanoi through the Harvard professor. A quick review of this exchange persuades me that it has been extremely well handled and that it is to our advantage to keep it going. If it leads to a nibble, and we should get grounds for a bombing suspension, we would have a clear predicate on which to base any necessary resumption if the truce were not productive or if there were heavy reinforcement from the North. If, on the other hand, we get no response, we have certainly established a record which will show plainly that we were ready to stop the bomb-

ing on a still more forthcoming basis than any we have yet stated—even in the Texas speech. To me this exchange is a valuable and cost-free exercise, because even without it, as the next paragraph shows, I would be in favor of leaving Hanoi alone. While the exchange continues, we must stay away from Hanoi, but in my judgment we should stay away from there in any case. My reasons follow:

(3) *No headline-making intensification of the bombing—and especially no more bombing in Hanoi.* As you know, I think that the bombing of the North is quite intense enough as it stands. While I strongly support bombing of communications lines and supply depots—*tactical* bombing—I see no evidence whatever that North Vietnam is a good object for a major *strategic* campaign. Dick Helms told me solemnly today that every single member of his intelligence staff agrees with the view that bombing in the Hanoi–Haiphong area has no significant effect whatever on the level of supplies that reaches the Southern battlefields. Nor does any intelligence officer of standing believe that strategic bombing will break the will of Hanoi in the foreseeable future. This strategic air war engages our pilots and the pride of our air commanders; it also has a military life of its own, with its own claimed imperatives. But it does not affect the real contest, which is in the South. Its political costs are rising every week. We have everything to gain politically and almost nothing to lose militarily if we will firmly hold our bombing to demonstrably useful target areas.

The one great objection to this otherwise desirable restraint is that the top brass and their political friends disagree. I know you have thought in the past that we could not afford to break with them on this issue, but I believe that the balance of opinion is shifting rapidly against them and that it is more and more to our advantage to put a distance between ourselves and people like Symington, Rivers, Harvey—and even Russell.² They are overwhelmingly wrong, on all the evidence, and the belief that you are gradually giving in to them is the most serious single fear of reasonable men in all parts of the country.

(4) *No large-scale reinforcement beyond totals already agreed.* I would hope that 525,000 would hold Westy through 1968. I would certainly try to meet this total early if that is now what he wants, because if there is to be hard fighting in the next fifteen months the sooner it comes the better. Indeed, my impression is that whatever we do, our casualties are likely to go up at the turn of the year because of operations now planned, and this seems to me one more powerful argument against an extended holiday pause.

² Reference is to Senators W. Stuart Symington (D–MO), Mendal Rivers (D–SC), James Harvey (R–MI), and Richard B. Russell (D–GA).

(5) *No immediate change in our public posture.* The Texas speech is one of the most powerful you have given, and I think it is right in moving the emphasis a bit toward the whole of Southeast Asia and away from the details of Vietnam. I think we ought to do more of this later on, because as you know I think the strategic victory has already been won and is worth claiming. But I do not think the next month or two will be a good time for very extended additional argument. Neither Rusk nor McNamara states the matter quite the way you do, and you yourself need to save your breath until later.

(6) *No elaborate effort to use new facts and figures to prove our case.* There is a credibility gap and it really makes no difference that the press has done more to make it than we have. We do not gain with the mass of the people by what we report of progress in Vietnam. What we desperately need is that the newspaper men should begin to find progress for themselves. Joe Alsop, with all his weaknesses, is worth ten of our spokesmen. We should strive for a situation in which Reagan's charge begins to look plausible—that we really are hiding our successes—for whatever reason. It might cost us a few headlines and a few unbalanced television news reports to observe such a policy of reticence—but it would help to set a new stage for the necessary efforts we shall have to make next year.

I turn now to the things I would favor. As you will see, they grow out of what I am against.

1. I would favor a careful and considered exposition of the argument against an unconditional pause sometime in the next month or two. I think that the right man to do this would be Nick Katzenbach, and I think the arguments should be fully developed and firm. Once we have made an absolutely fixed decision on this point, we will end some of the chatter and we will lay a base for looking at other less categorical alternatives.

2. I think we should have a careful staff study of the possibilities for continuous bombing in the North which avoids startling targets and has the public effect of deescalation without seriously lightening the burden on the North Vietnamese. My conversations today persuaded me that there is a very promising possibility here that we can have both the essence of the present real military advantages of bombing and much of the advantage of seeming to exercise a new Presidential restraint. I would hope that this alternative could have as careful and complete a review as any other in the immediate future.

3. I would continue the effort to expand the visibility of Vietnamese participation in all forms. I understand that Bunker and Westy are tired of Washington prodding on the subject of ARVN performance, but I also understand that there is some real enthusiasm both in the Pentagon and in Saigon for brigading a few Vietnamese battalions with

U.S. forces in offensive action. I would give prompt and strong encouragement to this idea because nothing would do us more good than a few battlefield reports of truly shared combat.

4. All the evidence is that our present team in Saigon is much the best we have had. But they are not getting the very best people to help them even yet. I think you might make progress with the assignment of both Army and CIA officers if you were to press the Army people directly (not through Bob) and Dick Helms too to tell you whether they are using every possible incentive to get their very best professionals into the work of pacification, intelligence collection, province leadership, and other such traditional unglamorous activities. My agents tell me that the Pentagon rewards the battalion commanders but that it is not really giving top priority to getting top men into other countryside jobs.

5. Finally, I would not listen too closely to anyone who comes from a distance and spends only one day looking at the evidence. What I think I might do instead is to find a way of widening the circle of those who talk regularly about overall policy choices in this area. I do get a feeling that while a number of different people are working on a number of different angles, only a few are trying to keep the whole picture together, and those few are not your least burdened men. My impression is that here, as in the Middle East, the best organizer of continued study is Katzenbach (whom I have not seen today) and you may wish to look for a way of sitting with him and his people every now and then.

McG. B.

355. Notes of Meeting¹

Washington, October 17, 1967, 1:40–2:50 p.m.

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING
WITH
SECRETARY McNAMARA
SECRETARY RUSK
GENERAL WHEELER
CIA DIRECTOR HELMS
WALT ROSTOW
GEORGE CHRISTIAN

The President discussed his visit with the Prime Minister of Singapore, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew.²

Rostow: We need to get him with Reston and Joe Kraft.³

Helms: He would be good.

The President: He is vulnerable on Senator Jackson's⁴ question on how many troops does he have in Vietnam?

It looks as though the news is all bad.

The President then read a memorandum about a large group of protesters in Oakland, California. The President also read a Situation Room report which showed in a battle late yesterday that 58 U.S. men were killed in Operation Shenandoah.⁵

General Wheeler: The battalion had about 100 casualties out of a battalion of 900. Of course, the battalion is still operational.

The President: They really worked on our planes yesterday, didn't they?

Secretary McNamara: Yes, they hit three of four. I think they were lucky hits rather than any refinements in their anti-aircraft defenses.

The President: Well, let's have it analyzed so we will know what to say.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings. Top Secret; Eyes Only. The meeting was held at the White House.

² The President received Lee in the Oval Office in the afternoon and again at dinner. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary)

³ James Reston and Joseph Kraft were nationally syndicated columnists.

⁴ Senator Henry Jackson (D-WA).

⁵ The memorandum and situation report are not further identified. Operation Shenandoah was an effort to clear the VC from Phuoc Thuy Province.

What did you think of the McCarthy speech?⁶

Secretary Rusk: It was a confused statement. I resent the "yellow peril" junk.

The President: I thought your press conference was excellent, Dean.⁷

Secretary Rusk: I have a problem with the Foreign Relations Committee. Fulbright asked me to come again for a public session. I do not like them saying that I am scared of them. That doesn't set well down in Cherokee county.

I think the appearance in 1966 was a plus, but I do not want seven hours of public debate. What is your judgment?

The President: I haven't talked to anybody who didn't think your press conference was the best you have ever had. Prime Minister Lee told me that today.

The Committee is entitled to a report and a response to their questions on our national interest. I do not think you need to have it televised. I resent that they did not carry your press conference on television.

Secretary Rusk: They wanted me to tell them in advance that I was about to announce a major new policy on Vietnam before they would carry it live.

The President: Well, I would go to the hearings and hit them hard and solid. I applaud your raising your voice. You speak for a lot of people, including 500,000 men out there who can't speak for themselves.

Secretary Rusk: The response from young people has been overwhelming. I've had a number of them ask for my autograph, and there have been many letters including one from Abe Fortas.

The President: Lee said the great mistake in Vietnam was not made in 1965 but was made in 1961.

[Here follows discussion unrelated to Vietnam.]

The President: What is the current feeling about Pennsylvania?

Secretary Rusk: There has been nothing back from Hanoi. We should get M and A to agree that we have had nothing back.

⁶ Senator Eugene McCarthy (D-MN) asserted that Rusk was obfuscating by injecting the issue of a "yellow peril" into the debate over Vietnam. See *The New York Times*, October 17, 1967.

⁷ In his October 12 press conference Rusk described Vietnam as vital to U.S. security. In addition, he discussed continued efforts by the U.S. Government to seek peace in Vietnam and described the September 29 San Antonio statement by the President as "an essentially reasonable and fair proposal for anyone who is interested in peace." See Department of State *Bulletin*, October 30, 1967, pp. 555–564.

Secretary McNamara: I think we should keep our option of making this whole sequence of events public.

The President: I agree. We should let Secretary Rusk disclose it under strong questioning.

We should make the record clear that we said we would stop the bombing for productive discussions. They said no.

I think we should let our folks know that we have tried. We quit bombing August 22 inside the 10-mile perimeter of Hanoi. It has been two months.

Secretary Rusk: There is a difference here between stating the substance of what took place and identifying the individuals.

The President: I would not identify the individuals. I would say that we had outside, fresh new professorial minds at work on this.

Secretary McNamara: If you are not going to have a pause, let's make as much of this as we can.

The President: I would say it at executive session. It will take about two days for it to leak. After it does, we will be prepared to completely handle it.

Secretary McNamara: It would be good to have a white paper on this whole episode.

The President: Yes, we should say that we had good outside help. We have to have something to carry us in this country. Every hawk and every dove and every general seems to be against us.

Buz, your generals almost destroyed us with their testimony before the Stennis Committee. We were murdered on the Hearings.⁸

The President then discussed a credibility analysis which he received last night.

The President then asked how long we should wait on Pennsylvania.

Secretary Rusk: We should wait at least until Friday.⁹

Activity on Phuc Yen is high. The Joint Chiefs are anxious to get it out of the way. I would include it as part of the 10-mile perimeter and do nothing before Friday.

⁸ See footnote 4, Document 287.

⁹ October 20.

General Wheeler: We lost three aircraft to MIGs. We've taken out other air fields. We recommend Phuc Yen, the Hanoi bridges and canals and the Hanoi thermal power plant.¹⁰

The President: None of this can be hit until after we finish up on Friday.

Secretary Rusk: I am not for a big fireworks display. Some people have advised me that it would take a hundred aircraft on Phuc Yen.

Secretary McNamara: What is scheduled is for four groups of 24 attack aircraft each.

Secretary Rusk: I am running out of gas on this.

The President: We will open up the whole thing on Friday.

[Here follows discussion unrelated to Vietnam.]

The President ended the discussions with a review of his talks with Prime Minister Lee. Lee told the President that Singapore would be the first to go down the China chute if the U.S. gets out of Vietnam.

The President said he told Lee he intended to stay but the opposition in this country was steadily mounting.

¹⁰ In response to a September 12 request from the President for recommendations on the air war, the JCS submitted JCSM-555-67 on October 17, which recommended 10 new military measures against the DRV. See footnote 12, Document 357. On October 23 the President authorized a one-time attack on the Hanoi Thermal Power Plant as well as the specified targets in the Hanoi prohibited area, including two major bridges and the Phuc Yen and Gia Lam airbases. See Document 363.

356. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, October 18, 1967, 0905Z.

8854. 1. During my call on Thieu with Habib and Jorden, President-elect discussed plans for an approach to Hanoi.² He is frankly skeptical a move now will produce a favorable response from Ho. Nonetheless he feels obligated to follow up on his campaign promise.

2. His present intention is to cover the peace theme in a general way in his inaugural address. He will stress that his government wants to “open the door to peace—and keep it open.” Desire for peace will be balanced by expression of South Vietnamese determination to continue to fight against aggression from the North and for Southern independence.

3. Thieu plans to follow inaugural with a direct message to Ho Chi Minh. He sees two possible approaches:

A. An expression of desire for peaceful settlement and for direct discussions to achieve that end. If this produced a favorable response, Thieu would ask us to halt bombing. We would assume that reciprocal action would be forthcoming from the other side.

B. A halt in bombing to be followed immediately by a message to Ho proposing immediate talks.

4. Thieu is aware of the desirability of avoiding the kind of message that would be read in Hanoi and elsewhere as an ultimatum. He seems anxious to avoid the appearance of adopting a propaganda gimmick. Even so, he fully expects Ho to reject any initiative from Saigon at this time. “But at some time he may respond—in two months, or six months, or a year.”

5. I told Thieu I would report his views immediately and would come back to him with our reactions. We agreed that close and full consultation between us on this matter was necessary.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 15–1 VIET S. Secret; Priority; Exdis.

² Habib and Jorden visited Vietnam October 15–21. This discussion was also reported in Bunker’s 25th weekly telegram to the President, telegram 8875 from Saigon, October 18. (Ibid., POL 27 VIET S; also in Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vietnam 8B(1), 4/67–11/67, Bunker’s Weekly Report to the President [2 of 2]; and printed in Pike, *The Bunker Papers*, pp. 205–214) Telegram 8578 from Saigon, October 14, reported on a published story in a Saigon newspaper that Thieu had met with a group of Japanese correspondents on October 13 and told them about his desire to send a letter to Ho Chi Minh proposing direct talks between their governments. He invited Japanese Prime Minister Eisaku Sato to become involved in the search for peace. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S)

6. *Comment:* The first of Thieu's proposed alternatives seems to me clearly preferable. A simple, straightforward message from Thieu to Ho expressing a desire for peace and a willingness to talk would, when surfaced, put the new Saigon regime in a favorable light internationally and at home. If rejected, as we must assume it would be, the offer would highlight the contrast between Hanoi's intransigence and Saigon's reasonableness. This approach would, of course, leave room for the critics to charge that an offer to talk without an end to bombing was meaningless. Saigon's answer to that would be: we are interested in ending the war, not half of it, and attacks from the North and infiltration had not ended.

7. Thieu's second course, a bombing halt followed by a message to Ho, would require far more elaborate preparation and coordination. In undertaking a bombing stoppage, we would want to maximize chances for a favorable response and it is questionable that a proposal from Saigon would achieve that end.

8. Would appreciate soonest Department's reaction to above.³ If we come down on side of first alternative, it may be desirable to go back to Thieu with suggested language for at least the key portion of any message to Ho.

Bunker

³ See Document 361.

357. Notes of Meeting¹

Washington, October 18, 1967, 7:30–9:30 p.m.

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S WEDNESDAY NIGHT MEETING
ATTENDING THE MEETING WERE:
SECRETARY OF STATE DEAN RUSK
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE ROBERT McNAMARA
UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE NICHOLAS KATZENBACH
MR. WALT ROSTOW
PROFESSOR HENRY KISSINGER
MR. JUSTICE ABE FORTAS
GENERAL MAXWELL TAYLOR
MR. CLARK CLIFFORD

Secretary Rusk: I am sure I speak for all of us in expressing appreciation and admiration of Professor Kissinger. He handled a very delicate matter in a very professional manner. I think we may wish to begin this discussion with Professor Kissinger's explanation of M and A.²

Professor Kissinger: M is a biologist with very little political judgment. He is similar to many American scientists who are carrying placards. His primary motive is to bring the war in Vietnam to an end.

A is probably a Communist. He is very aware politically. He has close relations with Ho. In 1946 Ho stayed at his home in Paris.

I have little confidence in M's judgment. I have greater confidence in A's judgment. If it served his purpose A might color his report, however.

My contact began last summer. I was attending a meeting in Paris of scientists. The Soviet and French representatives to that meeting expressed interest in sending two representatives to Hanoi. M and A were sent to Hanoi. They saw some possibilities of movement as a result of their meetings with Ho and with Prime Minister Dong. We have been in touch with them since their return to Paris after their visit to Hanoi. There have been a number of exchanges with them and through Bo to Hanoi.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings. Top Secret; Eyes Only. The meeting was held in the Cabinet Room.

² Marcovich and Aubrac.

Secretary Rusk: The key paragraph of our outgoing message and their response sum up what has taken place.

The exchanges have been going on since August 25. We stopped bombing in the ten nautical mile circle of Hanoi and haven't hit inside that area since August 25.

Secretary Rusk then read the key paragraph of our message to Hanoi via the Paris channel. The paragraph follows:

[Here follows the text of the message quoted in Document 349.]

The Secretary said it was important to remember that the statement included an important assumption of August 25. This was that while discussion proceeded the U.S. government would assume that the Democratic Republic of Vietnam would not take advantage of the bombing cessation. This was directly related to prompt and productive discussions without taking military advantage of the bombing cessation.

The reply from Hanoi follows:

At the present time the United States is continuing the escalation of the war in an extremely grave manner. In these conditions words of peace are only trickery. At a time when the United States continues the escalation we can neither receive Mr. Kissinger nor comment on the American views transmitted through this channel. The position of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam is perfectly clear. It is only when the United States has ceased without condition the bombardments that negotiations can take place.³

Secretary Rusk: There are two points to be made. The first, we have had nothing constructive from this exchange. They haven't said yes. They have taken no reciprocal actions for the restriction against bombing within the ten-mile limit of Hanoi.

³ The response was received by Marcovich during his meeting with Bo on October 17. Kissinger reported the text of the message to Read as follows: "Actually the U.S. has been following a policy of escalation of an extremely serious nature. In these conditions the U.S. proposals of peace are double-faced. At a time when the U.S. is pursuing a policy of escalation we cannot receive Kissinger, nor comment on the American proposals transmitted through this channel. The position of the Government of the DRV is perfectly clear: it is only when the US has ended without condition the bombardment that discussion *can* take place." (Memorandum of telephone conversation between Kissinger and Read, October 17; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA)

Second, M and A think Bo wants talks to continue. There is a question whether this is a result of M's enthusiasm or Bo making it clear that Bo himself wants discussions to continue.

All we have indicates Bo believes this to be an important contact.

Their message refers to "escalation." They are also more specific. They say "talks *can* start if there is a cessation of bombing without conditions." "Can" is more specific. The mood seems more definite.

But there is no assurance talks *will* start.

There have been no talks about the assumption that no military advantage would be taken of a bombing cessation. It seems to me that they're discussing a possible negotiate and fight strategy.

On the whole, their attitude seems to be fairly negative. Three Nobel peace prize winners who visited Hanoi ran into a very harsh position. They were pessimistic about the outcome. Norway thinks Hanoi is not interested in conversation. They say that Hanoi believes it would have to offer concessions so large as to persuade them that a better course is to wait for the result of the 1968 U.S. elections.⁴

The Rumanian Foreign Minister who visited Hanoi said that if the U.S. stopped the bombing he thought "something would happen."⁵

We have heard the same thing from Eastern Europeans. They have said such things as "the atmosphere would be improved . . . we are confident negotiations would result."

Professor Kissinger: As I have said, I attended a meeting of a group of scientists in Paris discussing the Middle East. The scientific meeting sent M and A to Hanoi. A saw Ho. Both saw Pham Van Dong. He [Kissinger] saw them within an hour after they returned to Paris. At that point they knew nothing of the history of negotiations. He took down notes of our meeting and sent them to the Department.

I have some indication of Bo's eagerness to keep the channel open.

At the last meeting Bo asked (through M and A) if I would be in Paris. He said he would be available all the time. He said he was willing to receive any communications.

⁴ A retyped telegram, undated but attached to an October 18 covering memorandum to the President from Rostow, contained a report that the Yugoslav State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Marko Nikezic, had told the Norwegians that the North Vietnamese would wait to enter negotiations until after the American presidential elections of 1968, at which time the situation would be more favorable. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Pennsylvania (continued))

⁵ The reference should be to Romanian Prime Minister Ion Maurer, who visited Hanoi in early October. As reported in telegram 566 from Bucharest, October 17, Maurer told a French diplomat that if the bombing stopped "something could be arranged." Telegram 566 is attached to a covering memorandum to the President from Rostow, October 18; *ibid.*

We sent them three communications. There was some slight change in tone in the last reply.

When one looks at the whole record it shows that Bo is eager to keep this going. There has been a slight movement in their position.

Secretary Rusk: Is their eagerness attributed to the restrictions around Hanoi?

Professor Kissinger: No, I do not think so. Our first message coincided with a major attack on Hanoi. Our second message coincided with an attack on Haiphong. We offered them the ten-mile circle. They did not ask for it.

The President: What are your recommendations?

Professor Kissinger: I prefer two options depending on which way you gentlemen decide to go.⁶

If there is an intention to have a bombing pause it would be desirable to do this through the existing channel. I would recommend in this case that we interpret their last message under conditions of de-escalation and ask that they receive me or somebody else in conjunction with the cessation of bombing. I would notify them of the time and date of the beginning of significant de-escalations.

If there is no pause it becomes a question of how to wind up this channel diplomatically and publicly. Confronted with a termination they may yield. We could indicate that we can only construe their last message as a refusal. If it is not a refusal I would give them a chance to say why it isn't a refusal. I would give them ten days, the normal time required for turn around; if there is no response then I would resume full-scale activities.

The President: As I see it there are these options:

- (1) An early bombing pause.
- (2) Close out the channel and resume activity.
- (3) Wait for further response.

Secretary Rusk: There are variations of those alternatives and others. I would say to M that it looks like the last message was refused. If not, we need a fast answer.

I am concerned about how far we go with M and A. There is a middle party whose actions are to be considered and whose judgments must be weighed and analyzed.

It may be that we have to do it with intermediaries. But a lot is to be gained by the most official exchanges possible.

⁶ Kissinger expanded upon these options in an undated memorandum to the President. (Ibid.)

I see no need to close out the Paris channel. I would make it clear that the offer of October 9⁷ remains open. The other side has refused this, it appears.

The most serious problem is the disinterest of Hanoi—talking about not taking advantage of the pause.

In December we were in touch with them through the Poles. It appeared then that we could talk without stopping the bombing. We had a man ready in Warsaw to talk with the representative of Hanoi.

If we pause without an indication that something will happen we are in a very exposed position.

In my judgment we also will have to pause longer than 37 days to convince anybody.⁸ We did not gain much from it. Unless there is a serious effort by the Soviets and the British who are co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference.

Frankly, I am itchy for direct official talks. We need to arrange for a direct official exchange. Bo will not see Professor Kissinger.

Professor Kissinger: Yes, I asked to see him and he would not meet with me.

Secretary Rusk: Bo knew that M was taking very detailed notes. We do not doubt the authenticity of this channel.

Secretary Katzenbach: All of this does make a difference. We need to leave our options open. The thing which has most interest to me is that I cannot see any motivation on Hanoi's part unless it is considering some kind of talks. I cannot see the ten-mile circle as a rational reason for their position. They never asked for the ten mile restriction. They haven't asked for more.

It may be that they may not be able to make up their mind what to do.

The President: My judgment is that they are keeping this channel going just because we are not bombing Hanoi. I know if they were bombing Washington, hitting my bridges and railroads and highways I would be delighted to trade off discussions through an intermediary for a restriction on the bombing. It hasn't cost him one bit. The net of it is that he has a sanctuary in Hanoi in return for having his Consul talk with two scientists who talked with an American citizen.

Secretary Katzenbach: I disagree with that very much. It does not seem worthwhile to go to Ambassador Thompson in Moscow and request that he talk with the North Vietnamese representative there. This would have no expectation of success in my judgment.

⁷ See Document 349.

⁸ Reference is to the bombing pause of December 1965–January 1966.

I do not know if this is going to get us anywhere.

The President: Which alternative would you favor?

Secretary Katzenbach: The pause does make more sense. It would bring together the ranks in this country and abroad. I would favor a pause in mid-November or early December.

The President: Just pause, period?

Secretary Katzenbach: Yes, I would say very loud and clear that we are ready. I would make clear through private channels that the assumption that they would not take advantage of the bombing still holds. If they attacked us along the DMZ I would respond immediately. If they were to begin a major resupply we should deal with that immediately.

The President: Bob, how effective can you be in dealing out resupply?

Secretary McNamara: Mr. President, I believe I can show beyond a shadow of a doubt that bombing in Hanoi and Haiphong will not affect resupply in the South one bit.

If they take military advantage we should counter with military reciprocal action. If they unleash artillery across the DMZ, we should pound it. If they begin a step up in infiltration we should hit their lines of communication between North Vietnam and South Vietnam and in the panhandle.

I disagree with the analysis of the effects of the ten mile circle on the Paris channel.

World opinion would support our hitting back at them if we are hit during a pause.

The President: Do you see the possibility of a pause longer than 37 days?

Secretary Katzenbach: They have said in their communications with us three to four weeks. I would recommend 30 to 40 days.

Professor Kissinger: They have said in their discussions with me "a few days."

The President: As I see it you would wait 40 days and resume only on a tit for tat basis. Otherwise you would wait 40 days. You would tell other people that you would hit them if they hit us.

Secretary Katzenbach: Yes, I would explain the "take advantage" clause. I would stop the bombing until they take advantage of it.

We should say publicly we are stopping the bombing and that we are ready for discussions.

Tell the world that we are waiting.

The President: How does that differ with what Professor Kissinger has already told them?

Secretary Katzenbach: It doesn't differ. They haven't accepted or rejected that either.

The President: Read what they said again.

Secretary McNamara then read the text of Hanoi's response again. (See page 2.)

Secretary Katzenbach: They did reject seeing him (Kissinger).

Mr. Rostow: In Secretary Rusk's memo,⁹ the word "negotiations" was used. In my interpretation, the word "discussions" was used. We should make clear which interpretation is correct.

General Taylor: My reaction is that this is one of the few times we have had an authentic link.

What came back looks to me like a refusal. Our public stance to the world should be that we are sincere and willing to make concessions.

But we should remember that negotiations are not the end in themselves. Panmunjom wasn't pleasant.

Any indication of weakness is viewed with contempt. On the trip Clark Clifford and I made to our Asian allies, they could not understand our not using force.

By showing weakness we could prejudice any possible negotiations.

I recommend that we accept this as a rejection. I would tell them that the channel is always open if they have anything further to say.

In my opinion, we should not have a pause without the principle of reciprocity.

If we have a pause, let Thieu request it. This would give us a better position and would not make it appear as another Washington proposal to Hanoi.

We cannot afford to be weak.

Mr. Clark Clifford: As I see this, there are two questions to be considered. The first concerns the matter of the Paris contact. The second concerns the bombing of North Vietnam.

On the matter of the contacts, I want to make absolutely clear how this sequence of events developed. If I understand it, you (Professor Kissinger) went to a meeting of scientists. M was there. At the initiative of the Soviets and the French, the scientists decided to send a representative to Hanoi. M's purpose in going to North Vietnam was to try to end the war. This started as a Cyrus Eaton group.¹⁰

⁹ Not further identified.

¹⁰ Cyrus Eaton was a philanthropist who helped to organize the Pugwash Conference.

Professor Kissinger: That is correct. It is no longer a Cyrus Eaton group but an independent entity.

Mr. Clark Clifford: They (M and A) went to Hanoi, saw Ho and Pham Van Dong, and then returned.

Professor Kissinger: I saw them (M and A) at their initiative. I saw to it that their report would get to responsible American officials. They saw Pham Van Dong for two meetings. A saw Ho for an hour. They reported to me what they knew.

We then came back to them with our message of August 25. There have been no private discussions on my part. All of the messages and discussions I have had have been at the direction of the Department.

Clark Clifford: As I see it, there are five parts to their response:

- (1) They charge the US with escalation.
- (2) They charge the U.S. with trickery.
- (3) They will not receive Mr. Kissinger.
- (4) The position of their government is clear.
- (5) It is only when bombing ceases that negotiations—or discussions—can take place.

It looks like they are saying the same thing they have said before. It seems to me that a reply along these lines is indicated. We should tell them that we have seen nothing new out of this exchange and that we are prepared to terminate the dialogue. If they have a different idea about it, of course they are free to let us know what those ideas may be.

We should say that we assume from the language you have used that you feel there is nothing to be gained from a continuation of this dialogue. If you have a different view we would be glad to hear it.

There is talk that this channel may keep Bo informed. I believe they will use it for whatever purposes they choose.

I do not believe they will use *this type of channel* when they are serious about really doing something.

I feel there should be something solid in this. This is so subject to interpretation.

It is an unfortunate way for really serious progress to be made.

The channel in Moscow affords a direct means of contact with a fully authorized representative of this government.

On the matter of bombing, I see no basis for suspension or cessation.

I think it would be misinterpreted in Hanoi. It would be utilized to build up their supplies, just as they did during the four day Tet holiday.

On the matter of suspension, this is the wrong time. I think the right time is after the election of the South Vietnamese assembly and after the formation and shake-down of their new government.

We need to get the government of South Vietnam as a functioning unit.

I would recommend the advantages of Thieu proposing a pause rather than the U.S. The U.S. and Hanoi are locked into their positions. With a new, stable government in Saigon, North Vietnam may feel different about their position.

I would have Thieu say “We have asked the United States for a suspension of the bombing.” From the standpoint of world opinion, it might be much better for South Vietnam.

So I would recommend three things:

- (1) Watch
- (2) Wait
- (3) See how the situation develops.

We would have allies to be considered. There is a question as to the benefit of a pause after a Summit meeting with the allies.

In conclusion, I would have a sign-off on Henry’s effort. I would go to a contact of a more formal nature. On the matter of bombing, I would show no weakening of resolve. I would not change the situation around Hanoi. It may lead to some development later on.

Mr. Justice Fortas: What is important is how all of this comes out.

We aren’t just concerned with how to get them to talk but with a total resolution of the situation.

It is important for us to keep this in mind. We have given fantastic credentials to a non-official effort by halting the bombing around Hanoi. The President has made an ultimately generous offer. Hanoi gave its own spokesmen no credentials. They did not let Bo even see Professor Kissinger.

I see no ray of hope out of this.

If we take into account all of this, we know there are words which *could* give a ray of hope.

Non-official discussions are for the purpose of testing perimeters. I believe this non-official channel is now closed out.

Professor Kissinger should say, “thanks, it’s too bad. You know you could have gotten somewhere if you had really wanted to.”

We need to summon all our courage and strength from the Lord and maintain our position here.

With all of the pressures that are brought to bear on us, the temptations are strong to pursue an avenue which may in the end be more destructive and not constructive at all.

In my opinion, the next time you suspend bombing you have quit bombing.

The bombing pauses have intensified criticism in this country. I cannot see why they will not negotiate with the bombing but say they will talk without the bombing. This has always been incomprehensible to me.

A bombing pause will not reduce the pressure and clamor in this country. The pressure cannot be diminished by a cessation of the bombing. It would be sad if on the basis of what you have before you, you were to cease the bombing.

Clark Clifford: The attitude from the Asians with whom General Taylor and I spoke while we were on our tour was that North Vietnam could go on indefinitely without the bombing. They are not concerned about the losses which are being sustained in their young men. They believe men are servants of the state, and the loss of men is not a serious matter. The fighting all takes place in South Vietnam. Without the bombing, Southeast Asians feel there is no inducement for the North Vietnamese to seek peace. This thing could go on for twenty years.

If we stop bombing, they will build up their industries, their transportation lines, and industries, their food supplies, and their communications.

In my opinion a bombing pause makes the possibility of peace much more remote. This is the unanimous opinion of the Asians out there.

The President: While we would make it difficult for them with the bombing, the very fact that we hit Hanoi arouses 100 nations of the world. Many say that what we gain is not worth what we suffer in pilot losses and in the loss of support in other nations of the world.

The President then read a memo from McGeorge Bundy outlining Mr. Bundy's views on the war.¹¹ The President did not identify this document as having been authored by Mr. Bundy. In short, Mr. Bundy said that bombing in the Hanoi–Haiphong area does not affect supply in the South. It does not affect the real conflict in the South. He said that the top brass and their political friends disagree. They are wrong on the evidence.

The President: Hanoi has been off limits for two months. There are only twenty targets which have been recommended which are not now authorized out of about 416 strategic military targets.

Secretary McNamara: On the matter of the Paris exchange, I consider this to be an important dramatic change in attitude.

Their behavior is consistent with the way they should act under pressure. They have not been forthcoming in these exchanges. *But my evaluation is that if bombing were to cease, talks will start quickly.*

There is some possibility this will lead to a settlement.

I would not cut off the channel before February or March. It is a question of whether we should have a pause, a pause in the next twelve months.

¹¹ Document 354.

We need to move toward settlement in the next twelve months.

On September 12 we asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to give us the ways they saw to substantially shorten the war.¹² Every action they recommended related to areas outside South Vietnam. I believe we need to probe this slight possibility to see if it can be productive. I do not believe we can maintain the support of our people in this country for twelve months.

I disagree with Abe (Fortas). I do not believe that the pauses have led to more dissension and division in this country. I believe a pause would increase rather than decrease support.

A pause need not have military disadvantages.

We should not cut off the Paris channel. I share the view of whoever wrote the memo the President just read. The bombing cessation isn't affecting how the war is carried on in the South. I believe Thieu should be brought in to this.

Secretary Rusk: I recommend that Professor Kissinger go on to Paris as planned tomorrow. When he arrives there we will have a cable waiting for him saying that we have not had a satisfactory answer and give him what we believe he should tell M and A. Tell them we have had nothing back.

Professor Kissinger: A is coming up from Rome. They may have a fallback position once we give them this information.

Secretary Rusk: I do not underestimate the value of informal contacts on any occasion. In the past, unofficial contacts have been very helpful. I remember the role of Mr. John Scali in helping us misinterpret a message from Khrushchev during the Cuban Missile crisis.¹³ I do not think it wise to have Ambassador Thompson tickle his man in Moscow.

In our previous contacts, the other side knew how to say more than they have said in this.

¹² In JCSM-555-67 from Wheeler to McNamara, October 17, the JCS responded to the President's September 12 request. They recommended removal of restrictions on targets in the DRV, expanded air and ground operations in Laos and Cambodia, more aggressive naval operations, including the mining of harbors and rivers, and the expansion of covert paramilitary operations in Laos, Cambodia, and North Vietnam. For full text of the memorandum, see U.S. House of Representatives, Armed Services Committee, *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 6, vol. II, pp. 108–110. McNamara forwarded JCSM-555-67 to the President on October 18. A notation on this covering note indicated that the President saw the memorandum. According to an attached note dated October 23, the President said to Rostow: "I want to take this up today—at lunch. See that we talk about it—and Walt, see if General Wheeler can be there today, too." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 2EE Primarily McNamara Recommendations)

¹³ During the October 1962 crisis, reporter John Scali met secretly with Soviet diplomat Alexandr Fomin in order to facilitate communications between the Soviet and American leaders. See *Foreign Relations, 1961–1963*, vol. XI, Documents 80, 85, 137, and 195.

They have been presented with a very serious, generous offer. This doesn't smell like much yet.

I would say to M in an uninstructed session that "my people back home don't think I've got anything." I would scare him. I would tell him that if he has anything he had better put it in right away.

Mr. Rostow: I recommend that we keep the channel open and adopt the posture of waiting a signal from them.

When they are serious there is a way for them to say it.

The military situation in the South is weak. They are using their reserve across the DMZ to keep the war going. The major field of battle is no longer in the South or even I Corps but in American politics. We are slow seeing the war.

The question is would a pause destroy our strength with the hawks and the doves? Domestic politics is the active front now.

I would prefer a pause soon rather than late. I would put in all of the creative imagination of this government in order that we not lose the hawks and come out in support of the doves.¹⁴

A pause would be no more than an exercise of domestic politics and international politics.

We should give to M a message indicating that we read their message as a dignified rejection of our proposal.

I agree that a bad beginning now could very well prejudice the final outcome.

Therefore, I would regret that they have taken no positive steps and leave the next step up to them.

After that, then we could see about a pause which would unite the country rather than divide it.¹⁵

¹⁴ In a memorandum to the President earlier that day, Rostow had argued for "building on the Paris channel into a pause on or about October 31," in order to avoid debate over Pennsylvania, ascertain whether it had been given a full chance to work just in case the North Vietnamese were earnestly seeking peace, and assuage critics of the administration's policies in Vietnam. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA)

¹⁵ Earlier that evening, at 6:45 p.m., Rostow had sent to the President a memorandum listing various arguments in favor of continuing the bombing of North Vietnam. Principal among these was the fact that an end to the bombardment of North Vietnam would allow its leaders to continue the war at a "lower cost." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Walt Rostow, Bombing)

The President: Professor Kissinger, we'll have a message for you there when you arrive.¹⁶ In my own mind, I see a failure on their part to indicate any desire to talk. I see no necessity of breaking off. Tell them our reaction. After we see what happens, then we can go on to another phase and discuss the possibilities of a pause.

¹⁶ Document 358. In an off-the-record session on the morning of October 19, the President met with Rusk, McNamara, and Rostow presumably to approve the message to Paris. (Johnson Library, President's Daily Diary) No other record of this meeting has been found.

358. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in France¹

Washington, October 19, 1967, 1641Z.

56516. For Kissinger. This cable provides initial guidance for your discussions with M. and A. during the next two days. In accordance with our discussions last night² the talking points suggested are intended exclusively for your use with M. and A., and do not include any message to Bo.

1. From the time of your opening discussions with M. tonight, you should make it entirely clear to him that Washington considers that the DRV has rejected the forthcoming USG proposals to bring about an end to the bombing and prompt and productive US/DRV discussions with no advantage being taken by the DRV on the ground. You should indicate that we base this conclusion not only on the negative DRV message of Oct. 17³ but also upon Hanoi's negative public statements and, most importantly, upon renewed DRV hostile actions in the vicinity of the DMZ. Each of these points are developed further below for your subsequent discussions, but it should be your objective from the start to indicate that the patience of your Washington friends is running out and that they feel that Hanoi has been unwilling to respond on any significant point.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA. Top Secret; Immediate; Nodis; Pennsylvania. Drafted by Read, cleared by Read and Walt Rostow, and approved by Rusk.

² See Document 357.

³ See footnote 3, Document 357.

2. In the course of reviewing this channel with M. and A. on October 20 and 21 you should cover the following points:

a. It has been eight weeks since M. and A. gave Bo the USG written proposal of August 25⁴ which indicated that the US was willing to stop the aerial and Naval bombardment of North Viet-Nam with the understanding that this would lead promptly to productive discussions looking toward a peaceful resolution of the issues between the US and the DRV on the assumption that the DRV would not take advantage of the bombing cessation. You should remind M. and A. of their initial reaction that the US offer was generous and forthcoming and note the reasonableness of the assumption stated and other principal points of the offer.

b. You should recall the US message of Sept. 13,⁵ text being cabled by septel, in which the US explained that the original proposal contained "neither conditions nor threats" and simply stated the "understanding of the USG that the DRV would be willing promptly to engage in productive discussions leading to peace when there was a cessation of aerial and Naval bombardment."

c. Remind the intermediaries of President Johnson's public commitment in San Antonio on September 29⁶ that "the US is willing to stop all aerial and Naval bombardment of North Viet-Nam when this will lead promptly to productive discussions. We, of course, assume that while discussions proceed, North Viet-Nam would not take advantage of the bombing cessation or limitation."

d. Cite your message of October 8⁷ which stated that the USG was prepared to carry out its original proposal by authorizing you to advise Bo of the precise date on which the bombardment would cease, to suggest to Bo a date and place for US/DRV discussions and to receive from Bo the DRV views with respect to the modalities for opening such discussions. Very much to your chagrin Bo refused to see you.

e. Note that since the date of our first substantive communication to the DRV in this channel in August, the US has for eight weeks unilaterally refrained repeat unilaterally refrained from bombing in the immediate vicinity of Hanoi.

f. Contrast the foregoing restraint with the sustained major military offensive in the vicinity of the DMZ during the first 3¹/₂ weeks of September, which included the use of heavy DRV artillery located in North Vietnam against GVN and US troops located in South Vietnam

⁴ See Document 293.

⁵ See Documents 318 and 321.

⁶ See Document 340.

⁷ See Document 349.

and large DRV troop attacks across the Ben Hai River boundary against Con Thien and other GVN/US military and civilian positions. Observe that even since your message of October 8 which took note of a reduction of military activities in the DMZ area, the DRV during the last week has again mounted heavy military attacks across the 17th parallel against South Vietnam. In these circumstances the allegation in the DRV message of October 17 that the US is pressing a policy of escalation is wholly lacking credibility.

g. You should emphasize that when the DRV messages in this channel of September 11,⁸ September 23⁹ and October 17 are analyzed they show that the DRV has been unwilling at any time (1) to indicate in this channel or otherwise that for its part it *will engage* in discussions with the US even if the bombing had stopped in accordance with US proposals; or (2) to make any substantive counter proposal on how to proceed to discussions leading to peaceful settlement of differences.

h. Note that on this date, October 19, a Reuters dispatch from Hong Kong indicates that “North Vietnam today rejected the American offer for a conditional bombing pause in return for peace talks” as offered by President Johnson on September 29 and repeated by Secretary Rusk at his October 12 press conference.¹⁰ We will send by septel the pertinent portions of the *Nhan Dan* official Hanoi daily article on which this report is based.

3. In reviewing this channel with M. and A. you are authorized to show to them the text of the September 13 USG message and other messages which you sent during your last visit in Paris which they have not yet seen.

4. Without requesting M. and A. to see Bo, which we assume they will promptly do to report your mood of discouragement and concern, you should indicate interest in learning what essential differences Bo (not M. and A.) could find, if any, with the main points in your review of the channel.

5. If pressed, you are authorized to state that the US proposals do remain open at this time but that you are not empowered to speak about future US views or actions.

Rusk

⁸ See footnote 2, Document 315.

⁹ See footnote 8, Document 337.

¹⁰ See footnote 7, Document 355.

359. Telegram From the Embassy in France to the Department of State¹

Paris, October 20, 1967, 1015Z.

5472. From Kissinger. M met me at the airport in a state of advanced euphoria. According to him, the last message from Bo made all the frustrations worthwhile. When I asked him for the cause of his optimism he called attention to the distinction between escalation and bombing and the change of tense in the last sentence. I quickly disillusioned him. I said that the issue was really quite simple. If Hanoi wanted to negotiate it should be able to find some way of expressing this fact by means other than subtle changes in tense and elliptical references full of double meanings. We had made a clear cut offer. It had had no response. We had accepted unilateral restrictions. Hanoi had increased its military activities including an offensive along the DMZ which could in no way be justified by military necessity. Washington's patience was nearing an end. M said our restrictions were a diminution of an escalation. I replied that if they were lifted, he would see quickly enough how real they were. I reminded him of his own positive reaction to the message of August 25. This had meanwhile been clarified and further strengthened. It was now up to Hanoi to be explicit enough to permit a conversation. M said that Hanoi by its silence had ratified A's notes of the conversation with Pham Van Dong. I replied that no serious person could expect the President to act on the basis of such conjectures while hundreds of shells were being fired daily by the other side along the DMZ.

M clearly shaken said that A would have to change his plans and return to Paris on the first available plane rather than Friday afternoon as he had planned. We called A in Rome. I spoke first. A also in a euphoric mood replied to my request for an early return: "You must have very good news." I told him the opposite was more nearly the case. I am leaving now to meet A at the airport where he, M and I plan to continue the conversation. I shall stress the points of your 56516.² I am certain they will wish to see Bo this afternoon.

Bohlen

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA. Top Secret; Priority; Nodis; Pennsylvania. Received at 7:20 a.m. In a covering note transmitting the telegram to the President, October 20, 10:50 a.m., Rostow wrote: "Herewith Kissinger does his initial job; but he's got a problem with the optimism of his two amateurs, M and A." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Pennsylvania) The notation "L" on the covering note indicates that the President saw the telegram.

² Document 358.

360. Telegram From the Embassy in France to the Department of State¹

Paris, October 20, 1967, 2634Z [*sic*].

5507. From Kissinger. A very distraught M, A and I had a long conversation at the airport. I was deliberately very hard in painting the Washington mood. I covered all the points of your 56516.² I dwelled particularly on the situation along the DMZ. I stressed that the current restrictions were among several that we had imposed on ourselves this year without eliciting a response. The current impatience in Washington was in part due to the fact that we had gone several times through a process where negotiations seemed imminent and then proved futile.

A replied that he did not think it was quite fair to charge Hanoi with failing to respond completely. They had given up the demand for a public declaration that bombing would stop. Their last message was much soberer than the first and said nothing about the withdrawal of American forces from SVN. Nevertheless he thought it urgent that he and M see Bo as soon as possible. I said that the decision was up to him as long as it was clear that the USG had nothing to say. If they met Bo they should understand that four points were of particular concern to Washington: (A) that a bombing stop be followed by prompt negotiations, (B) that these negotiations not be indefinitely delayed, (C) that no advantage would be taken on the ground, (D) the special situation along the DMZ.

M had to go to his laboratory at this point. A said that perhaps it had been a mistake for him never to see Bo alone. I said that it seemed to me futile to appeal to Bo's personal good will. He was a professional acting under instructions. He would change his position only if the seriousness of the situation were brought home to him. A replied that he would go to the appointment fifteen minutes early. A then called Bo. Unfortunately both Bo and Sung were away and will not return till 2100. They will try to see him shortly thereafter.

Bohlen

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA. Top Secret; Priority; Nodis; Pennsylvania. Received at 1:49 p.m. In a covering note transmitting the telegram to the President, October 20, 4:35 p.m., Rostow wrote: "Herewith Kissinger brings M and A closer to the facts of life." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Pennsylvania) The notation "L" on the covering note indicates that the President saw the telegram.

² Document 358.

361. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam¹

Washington, October 21, 1967, 0014Z.

57885. Ref: Saigon 8854.²

1. We appreciate being informed of Thieu's thinking on a possible message to Ho following inauguration. We fully agree with Thieu that it would be advisable to avoid kind of message that would either be read in Hanoi as an ultimatum or elsewhere as a propaganda gimmick.

2. We think that serious peace initiatives by newly elected GVN can be important contribution to allied peace stance. We are therefore gratified that Thieu has continued to give serious thought to pursuing his campaign pledges and developing a more flexible posture on the peace issue. (This incidentally has been most helpful in our dealings with press here.) Clearly it will be vital to continue our close consultations on this issue.

3. You should inform Thieu promptly that we are giving most careful consideration to his constructive ideas and that we will convey our thinking to him in the very near future. You might note that Thieu presumably would not dispatch any message to Ho until at least several days after his inauguration (e.g. second week of November), so that there is time for a considered reaction to his proposals. As our consultations proceed, we trust Thieu will limit discussion of this matter to the smallest possible circle of trusted advisers, as will we. In particular, we assume he and his associates will avoid being drawn by press into any specifics of substance or timing.

4. Foregoing drafted before receipt of Saigon 8995 reporting Ky's views on this subject, which differ markedly from Thieu's, and we will take his comments fully into account in subsequent messages. Our own preliminary view remains as set forth in general terms above.³

Rusk

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 15-1 VIET S. Secret; Priority; Exdis. Drafted by Isham, cleared by Davidson, and approved by William Bundy. A notation on the telegram indicates that the President also approved its transmission.

² Document 356.

³ Bunker reported in telegram 8995 from Saigon, October 19, that Ky told him that the Communists would not respond to any direct contact until the GVN could approach the North from "a position of accomplishment," a position which would take at least 6 months to achieve. Before that time, Ky opposed any direct overture by Thieu. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 15-1 VIET S) In telegram 58070 to Saigon, October 22, the Department advised that given the negative responses by the Hanoi leadership to various U.S. overtures it opposed Thieu's desire to have a halt followed by an overture from him; Thieu instead "should limit himself to general statements on peace in his inaugural speech" and then follow up if the North Vietnamese indicated any positive response. (Ibid., POL 27-14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA)

362. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, October 21, 1967, 9:15 a.m.

Mr. President:

Herewith Kissinger's account of the end of the Paris channel.

The hardening in their position is made absolutely clear by the reference to the Trinh interview of January 28: that language is talks "could" take place not "can," as in the private message of a few days ago.

The latest Burchett interview also goes directly back to the earlier interview and uses "could."²

The two major possibilities are:

—They regard U.S. politics and world diplomacy as too attractive to begin talks now.

—Their talks with Communist China involve a new deal for support or, even, Chinese military action.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Pennsylvania. Top Secret; Pennsylvania. The notation "L" on the memorandum indicates that the President saw both it and the attached telegram. A copy of the attached telegram 5545 from Saigon, which was received at 9:27 p.m. on October 20, is also in the National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA.

² An Associated Press dispatch from journalist Wilfred Burchett in Hanoi detailed new interviews with North Vietnamese officials such as Premier Pham Van Dong and Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh. Burchett reported that the North Vietnamese were "in no mood for concessions and bargaining and there is an absolute refusal to offer anything—except talks—for a cessation of the bombardment." Trinh simply reiterated that his statement of January 28 (that talks could follow a halt) "still held good." See *The New York Times*, October 21, 1967. INR analysts believed that Burchett's article represented a toughening of North Vietnam's negotiating stance and that the North Vietnamese leadership had confirmed Bo's statement that talks of a preliminary nature, necessary to define objectives, had to precede negotiations. "Our estimate is that Hanoi probably wants to get all it can before the Christmas and/or Tet period when it will be in a better position to evaluate the situation in South Vietnam and the trends of US politics." (Memorandum from Hughes to Rusk, October 23; Department of State, INR/IL Historical Files, East Asia Region, Vietnam) Another correspondent, David Schoenbrun, discussed his meeting with Pham Van Dong in an October 4 conversation with Cooper, Isham, Smyser, and other government representatives. Schoenbrun reported that Dong had purposely omitted the previous demand of the DRV for a "permanent" bombing halt. (Memorandum of conversation, October 4; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S)

I am putting CIA to work on the latter hypothesis urgently.³

Walt

Attachment

Text of Telegram From the Embassy in France to the Department of State⁴

Paris, October 20, 1967.

Paris 5545, from Kissinger

I saw M and A for an hour and a half at 1900 at M's house to review our position prior to their calling Bo. I told them that Hanoi's message had been reviewed at the highest level and most carefully. In its present form it was simply too vague to be acceptable. M said that a French judge had told him that "pourront" implied a moral commitment. I replied that one of our highest judges held a different view. A then wrote down the following phrases and asked me about my reaction: "The bombardment and other acts of war against the territory of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) are the sole obstacle to meaningful negotiations. As soon as the bombing ceases, negotiations can begin." A said that he was prepared to put his personal position with Ho behind these phrases. I replied that while I could not speak for the U.S. Government, these phrases would be a big step forward. The DMZ problem would still have to be dealt with. (I had not seen the Burchett interview reported in your 57498⁵ then.)

³ Responding to Rostow's request in an October 23 memorandum, Helms concluded that throughout the Paris contacts North Vietnam had not revealed a position "significantly different from or has ever been appreciably more forthcoming than the Hanoi position enunciated through other means, including public statements." The leaders in Hanoi were not interested in meaningful negotiations, would reject any insistence that talks be "fruitful," and would not be "forthcoming" given their belief that the administration's political position was "eroding." The North Vietnamese did not regard the Paris channel "very seriously"; thus not even demands by the Chinese would have influenced the outcome of Pennsylvania. (Central Intelligence Agency, DCI (Helms) Files, Job 80-B01285A, DCI (Helms) Chrono, Aug-Dec 1967)

⁴ Top Secret; Nodis; Pennsylvania.

⁵ In telegram 57498 to Paris, October 20, the Department informed Kissinger of Ambassador Sullivan's report that before the release of Burchett's interview, the DRV Chargé in Vientiane cautioned Sullivan on the necessity to ensure that the U.S. Government would not "misunderstand" statements in the upcoming interview as it had with the January 28 interview. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 27-14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA) Sullivan's report was transmitted in telegram 2081 from Vientiane, October 13. (Ibid., POL 27 VIET S)

I left M's house at 2030 and returned to my hotel to await word about the appointment with Bo. At 2130 A called in great distress that Bo had refused to see them. We agreed to meet at 2230. The following is their report of the conversation. A did the talking and M listened on the extension and took notes.

A: We would like to see you urgently.

Bo: There is nothing new to say. The situation is worsening. There is no reason to talk again.

A: There is something new and very important.

Bo: Repeated word for word the same phrase as before.

A: There is something very important—perhaps the most important juncture of our exchanges.

Bo: Repeated word for word the same phrase but then added: What is the important matter.

A: It has to do with the meaning of the last sentence of your last message and the sequence with which steps have to be taken.

Bo: Our position is perfectly clear. We stand on the Trinh interview with Burchett of January 28. Bo then repeated word for word the original phrase.

M and A were distraught. M was close to tears and A, too, was extremely depressed. In these circumstances I confined myself to thanking them for their dedication and meticulousness. The channel failed, not for lack of goodwill or imagination, but because Hanoi either could not or would not talk. M said that at least we had learned what Hanoi meant by unconditional. I replied that no serious person could believe in an absolute unconditional relationship. Our concerns had really been minimal: To make sure that Hanoi would talk promptly, that the talks would be serious and that Hanoi would not take advantage of the situation. A and M agreed. They half-heartedly urged a unilateral bombing pause but I said that this channel gave little encouragement for such a course. I told them again how much Washington appreciated their efforts. I told them that I would maintain strict secrecy. They promised that they would not comment no matter what might be said in other quarters. We agreed to meet tomorrow at 0930 to review the history of this channel.

363. Notes of Meeting¹

Washington, October 23, 1967, 1:05–3:40 p.m.

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING
WITH
SECRETARY RUSK
SECRETARY McNAMARA
WALT ROSTOW
GEORGE CHRISTIAN
GENERAL WHEELER

The President: Discussed the arrest of two UPI reporters mistaken for demonstrators.

Secretary McNamara said his information was that they had hid their credentials and went along to the detention camp for the story.

Secretary Rusk: I am going tomorrow to Los Angeles to make a speech at the same hotel where the President spoke in July. I expect a demonstration and it will be necessary that I be choppered to the location.

The President: As long as I am President we are going to make sure that justice is given to all but that the laws are enforced and applied. I think we handled the Pentagon problem very well.²

I am proud of the way our men in Vietnam handled themselves in commenting on the demonstrations here last weekend. I am concerned as to how we handle the draft card burners who are handing in their draft cards at various federal centers.

Secretary Rusk: I would enforce the law.

General Wheeler: Not to enforce the law is going to create unrest among Americans who do support the law.

[Here follows discussion of an Egyptian attack on an Israeli vessel.]

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings. Top Secret; Eyes Only. The meeting was held at the White House.

² During October 21–22, 208 antiwar protesters were arrested at the Pentagon. See *The New York Times*, October 23, 1967.

Director Helms: Discussed the text of CIA's analysis of Pennsylvania.³ In brief, it showed no new movement on the part of the Hanoi government toward peace negotiations.⁴

[Here follows discussion of a possible visit by Abba Eban of Israel.]

Director Helms: Read CIA analysis. He said there is a strange consistency in messages. "In short, Mr. President, you ended up where you began."

The President: Isn't there a lot we would gain by exposing this channel? You can summarize the results of the channel without identifying the people involved.

Secretary Rusk: The doves will make trouble if we publicize the message. In addition we may want to talk some serious business through this channel at a later time. M and A and Kissinger will not talk if we do not identify the channel. Kissinger is sending down a summary of the entire business. I would not identify the channel.

Director Helms: We have no indication that China is about to do anything in terms of getting into the Vietnam war.

Secretary Rusk: I have seen no change in the Chinese situation in over a year.

The President: Are we now ready to take the wraps off the bombing?

Secretary McNamara: It depends on what you want to do for the rest of the year. If you open up the ten mile circle the JCS have recommended the power plant and the two bridges.

General Wheeler: I would strongly urge the President not to have a pause. I urge you to open up the ten mile circle and also hit the Phuc Yen airfield.

Secretary Rusk: One serious disadvantage is that every time a new target is added it becomes an act of escalation. I would not rush in with a whole new series of targets.

³ See footnote 3, Document 362.

⁴ In a personal note sent to British Foreign Secretary George Brown, Secretary Rusk relayed that "Hanoi has slammed the door on our most recent peace efforts." The note was transmitted in telegram 58668 to London, October 24. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA) However, in telegram 5578 from Paris, October 23, Ambassador Bohlen drew a lesson from the Pennsylvania affair. He recommended removing qualifications, such as requiring that ensuing talks be "productive," from any future bombing halt formula, since to the North Vietnamese this statement would imply that "we would already have determined how the talks should come out and would amount to the acceptance of an American solution to the talks before they have even begun." The administration's formula should mention simply that as soon as the date and venue for talks could be agreed upon, bombardment of North Vietnam would cease. (Ibid.)

I have no strong feelings about Phuc Yen but it will have to be hit over and over. It may cost more planes than it will destroy. I do not object to the re-entry into the ten mile circle. But I do believe we should spread these targets out.

Secretary McNamara: There has not been a bunch of these targets.

The President reminded those present that the air field had been authorized previously subject only to winding up the Kissinger talks. Now we have gotten rid of all the excuses. Let's go with it.

Secretary McNamara: If we are going to strike we should hit the two bridges and the power plant. They will be announced as a re-strike.

General Wheeler: There is a list of thirteen targets. Some of these are restrikes.

Secretary McNamara: Then we are agreed that Phuc Yen is authorized; the two bridges are authorized, and the power plant is authorized. No more than one of these is to be hit in a single day.

The President: Are you pretty well up on schedule?

General Wheeler: Only three of the authorized targets haven't been hit.

Secretary Rusk: The attack on Phuc Yen will require two or three hundred aircraft, won't it?

General Wheeler: All totaled, it will require a couple of hundred. There will be four different waves of attack aircraft.

Secretary Rusk: What is the rationale for this when there are only twelve aircraft on the field?

General Wheeler: To destroy the support facilities as well as the aircraft.

Secretary Rusk: Phuc Yen will not give us a major international political problem unless there are a couple of hundred Soviets there. I wonder if the target is really there.

General Wheeler: Their air effectiveness will be further reduced by hitting Phuc Yen.

At Bac Mai, there is ground control intercept capabilities. There is also a filter center and over-all control. We have been paying a price for this facility. But we do not want to hold anything back. There is, we know, one prisoner of war facility at that location.

The President: Dean, are you ready to go on Phuc Yen?

Secretary Rusk: Yes, if you can spread out the number of strikes.

The President: Bob, are you ready to go on Phuc Yen?

Secretary McNamara: Yes.⁵

The President: I want Bob and Buz (General Wheeler) to talk to the JCS. Unless they have a target on their list which they are willing to put their reputation behind, don't recommend it. And let's not wash any more dirty linen in public.

My political instinct is to make public this exchange in Paris but say we are unable to make a proposal which we can stand on publicly. It doesn't seem we can win the war militarily. I asked the JCS suggestions on how to shorten the war but all of their proposals related to suggestions outside South Vietnam.

We can't win diplomatically either. We ought to make the proposals so clear and get such clear answers back that we can tell a farmer what has taken place and be able to have him understand it.

Now we are back to where we started.

We've tried all your suggestions. We've almost lost the war in the last two months in the court of public opinion. These demonstrators and others are trying to show that we need somebody else to take over this country.

People who want us to stop the bombing should know all we have gone through in this exchange. There are men at this table who do not know what all has taken place. We have not seen one change in their position. They are filling the air waves with this propaganda. Your two departments must provide answers to these charges. Senator Russell won't even talk about it. The hawks are throwing in the towel. Everybody is hitting you. San Antonio did not get through. I cannot mount a better explanation.

If we cannot get negotiations, why don't we hit all the military targets short of provoking Russia and China. It astounds me that our boys in Vietnam have such good morale with all of this going on.

We've got to do something about public opinion.

I want to make sure that Kissinger is on board. We ought to have a sentence every farmer can understand and the enemy say no to it.

We must show the American people we have tried and failed after going the very last mile.

What about the reserves?

⁵ On October 23 the President lifted the suspension of bombing in the Hanoi prohibited area and ordered attacks on various targets including the Hanoi Thermal Power Plant and the Long Bien and Doumer bridges. Authority to strike Phuc Yen airfield was restored at the same time, and U.S. aircraft struck it on October 24. See Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960–1968*, Part III, pp. 44-1–44-12.

Secretary McNamara: We do not need them in Vietnam now.

General Wheeler: We certainly do not need them at the current level of operations.

[Here follows discussion of the Middle East.]

364. Notes of Meeting¹

Washington, undated.

JOINING THE MEETING WERE:

SECRETARY McNAMARA

SECRETARY RUSK

CIA DIRECTOR HELMS

AND THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS OF CONGRESS:

SENATOR DIRKSEN

CONGRESSMAN BILL BATES

SENATOR HICKENLOOPER

CONGRESSMAN MAHON

SENATOR MARGARET CHASE SMITH

SENATOR SPARKMAN

SENATOR HAYDEN

The President: We were having our regular leadership meeting on various programs this afternoon. I wanted to review with you on a very confidential basis some of our difficulties in Vietnam.²

As of tonight Hanoi's position is just as rigid as it has been. We have had as many plans as we have Senators.

But I want you to be completely informed on our most recent exchange with Hanoi through intermediaries.

I have asked the Leadership to meet with me today in order to discuss with you our search for a peaceful settlement in Vietnam, and

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings. Top Secret. According to the President's Daily Dairy, this October 23 meeting lasted from 5:36 p.m. to 7:04 p.m. Those in attendance beginning at 5:36 p.m. were the President; Senators Mansfield, Russell Long (D-LA), Robert Byrd (D-VA), and Thomas McCormack (D-MA); Congressmen Carl Albert (D-OK) and John Moss (D-CA); Vice President Humphrey; Presidential aides Harold Saunders, Joe Califano, Mike Manatos, and Tom Johnson. They were joined at 6:05 p.m. by the participants listed here. (Ibid.)

² Notes of the early part of the meeting are *ibid.*, Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings.

particularly the question of whether or not a cessation of bombing would lead to negotiations.

As you know, for the past several months, and particularly in the past month or two, there has been increasing sentiment here and abroad urging the United States to stop bombing in the hope or expectation that this unilateral act would bring us to the peace table. While undoubtedly some of this sentiment has been instigated by those who are sympathetic to Hanoi's position—or unsympathetic to the position of the United States—there are nevertheless a substantial number of responsible people who have taken this view.

I have felt that this proposal should be taken seriously not only because it is held by a substantial number of people and governments, but also because it has been and will continue to be my policy to take whatever steps would lead to a peaceful resolution of Vietnam.

Unfortunately, it is my conclusion, and that of all of my principal advisers, that a total cessation of bombing at this time would not in fact lead to productive negotiations. I want review with you the reasons why we have come to that conclusion.

First of all, it should be clear that the United States has long been willing to enter into talks without any conditions at all—in any forum or through any channel—public or private, formal or informal, open or secret. At one time last November, there was some indication from a third country that Hanoi might be willing to enter into such secret discussions.³ While we had some doubts about the reliability of this information, we nonetheless pursued it and indicated our readiness to meet with Hanoi in accordance with proposals which we had previously suggested to third parties and which, we were told, they had tentatively accepted. Hanoi failed to show up for these discussions. We were told that the reason for this was bombing in the area of Hanoi. To meet this obstacle, I then ordered a cessation of bombing in the immediate vicinity of Hanoi and maintained this restriction for some four months. Hanoi continued, however, to refuse to meet with us at that time.

Following that November incident, we made efforts to pursue negotiations in Moscow, where we made a number of suggestions to the North Vietnamese and sought their views. They did not respond to our suggestions and the exchange culminated in my February letter to Ho-Chi-Minh and his flatly negative response, which Hanoi chose to publish.⁴

Since that time, despite additional efforts by the United States, the North Vietnamese have been unwilling to engage in any contact—privately or publicly—with Government officials. And they have repeat-

³ See *Foreign Relations*, 1964–1968, vol. IV, Document 308.

⁴ See Document 82.

edly stated publicly that there could be no "talks" until such time as the United States ceased bombing North Vietnam. Generally, their condition has been stated as a "permanent and unconditional" cessation of bombing and other acts of war, although sometimes the word "permanently" has been omitted.

It is not my purpose here to review in detail the various efforts which we and others have made but to discuss this condition which Hanoi has imposed as a prerequisite for negotiations.

I am quite willing to order a cessation of bombing and to meet any condition imposed by Hanoi if this will in fact lead promptly to productive discussions. But I simply cannot take this action if the only result would be that North Vietnam would take advantage of the cessation to reinforce and resupply its troops in a major way.

Remember, we are not talking about our conditions for talks—we will talk tomorrow without any conditions at all. We are talking about a minimum response to their condition—a cessation of the bombing.

At San Antonio, on September 29, I said: "As we have told Hanoi time and time again, the heart of the matter really is this: The United States is willing to stop all aerial and naval bombardment of North Vietnam when this will lead promptly to productive discussions. We, of course, assume that while discussions proceed, North Vietnam would not take advantage of the bombing cessation or limitation."

I would like to tell you very privately that this same proposal was made to Hanoi through a private channel a little more than a month before my San Antonio speech. We also offered to give them a specific date on which bombardment would cease and discuss with them privately the place and date where negotiations could begin. We also offered the possibility of preliminary contacts and a lesser reduction in hostilities.

Ten days ago we received an answer from them in which they declined to assure us that talks would promptly take place; refused to meet any American representative to discuss the cessation of the bombing and the time and place of negotiations; and said that there could be no contacts until the bombing ceased—without affirming that there would be such contacts then. Finally, they categorically refused to discuss the matter further with the foreign intermediaries involved thus closing down the private channel.

This private rebuff must be read in the light of Hanoi's recent public statements. These have all been extremely negative on the subject of peace negotiations. Let me cite a few of the more important ones:

1. On October 19 an editorial in their authoritative Party newspaper said categorically that all American proposals, including my San Antonio proposal, "had been refused."

2. Wilfred Burchett, the Australian Communist correspondent who is often a reliable spokesman for North Vietnam, last Friday⁵ published an article from Hanoi which some of you may have seen in the press, in which he reports the views of Premier Pham Van Dong and other high officials.⁶ He describes Hanoi as “in no mood for concessions or bargaining” and attributes this position to key North Vietnamese leaders: “There is no possibility of any talks or even contacts between Hanoi and the US Government unless the bombardment and other acts of war against North Vietnam are definitively halted.”

3. The Soviets, who we believe may have tried for peace on at least two occasions in the past, are now silent and not offering the slightest encouragement to us or to anyone else. Their conversations confirm our reading that Hanoi’s only desire is a permanent cessation of the bombing; they have said bluntly in private conversation with reliable third-country diplomats that Hanoi continues to regard any bombing pause as an ultimatum—which fits with all that Hanoi has been saying for nearly two years.⁷

4. Hanoi has applied serious military pressure south of the DMZ. General Westmoreland’s forces beat this back in late September but the threat now seems to be building up again. Several North Vietnamese in private conversations have referred to Hanoi’s expectation that it will achieve a significant military victory—probably meaning in the DMZ area—in the near future. There has even been talk by North Vietnamese representatives of “another Dien Bien Phu.”

Where does this leave us? First, all of us reluctantly conclude that the North Vietnamese are not seriously interested in meaningful peace negotiations at this time. There may be many reasons for this attitude. Clearly, the line from Hanoi is a hard one and this may be because they feel they can get a significant psychological or military victory south of the DMZ at some point. Or they may think that the political structure in the south will come apart under the new Constitution. Or that they can outlast us, as they outlasted the French, in a struggle of will. Or that criticism and division within the United States, and on the part

⁵ October 20.

⁶ See footnote 2, Document 362.

⁷ According to an INR analysis dated October 30, during the last month the Soviets had on several occasions made strong statements in support of the NLF, insisting that the United States had to deal with it independently of the Hanoi government. In addition, on October 30 Premier Kosygin rejected a proposal for the reconvening of the Geneva Conference, citing the prior need for a cessation of hostilities and recognition of the NLF. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Buttercup, Vol. (B)) In the covering memorandum transmitting this report to the President, Rostow speculated that the Soviets expected some sort of dialogue to arise from the Buttercup exchanges. (Ibid.)

of some of our important Allies in Europe, will deepen and cause us to abandon Southeast Asia.

In addition, we have to realize that serious discussions about peace present political problems for Hanoi at home, with its Communist Chinese ally, and with the NLF which might feel abandoned.

There is some evidence to support all of these views. But, quite honestly, I am unable to find any evidence—apart from hope or wishful thinking—which indicates that Hanoi is ready at this time to talk seriously.

I recognize that there will continue to be people who will urge—despite the evidence—apart from hope or wishful thinking—which indicates that Hanoi is ready at this time to talk seriously.

I recognize that there will continue to be people who will urge—despite the evidence—that a change in our bombing policy could lead us toward peace. But I am not prepared to act simply on hope. A cessation which did not in fact lead promptly to discussions, or which proved to be only an opportunity for North Vietnam to repair its bridges, its roads and railroads, and build up its stockpiles and supplies for a further attack upon our Marines in I Corps, would not be in the interests of peace.

But I also want to assure you that we shall keep every possibility for peace in mind, every offer and every door open. What we want—and what we shall continue to seek in every way possible—is some indication from their side that they are willing to discuss with us in good faith how to put an end to this war. And proposals they make—or any comment they make on our proposals—will have our sincere and considered attention.

In short, we have said that we would stop the bombing promptly if it led to prompt and productive discussions assuming they would not take advantage of it. Within the last few days we have had people who have talked to emissaries who talked to North Vietnam.

The best judgment and advice I have is that the current policies are best to bring us to an honorable peace. That is what I want you to know.

Senator Hickenlooper: If we stop the bombing, we will surrender in effect. I do not know what other objections the President has, but I think perhaps we should do more damage than we are doing. I would support a continuation in the bombing.

Senator Dirksen: I am still in your corner. Do not lose this leverage of bombing. Remember how many casualties resulted from the talks during the Korean war.

Congressman Bates: Senator Dirksen expressed my view. I would like to ask Secretary McNamara what is the effect of the bombing? There has been great misunderstanding about what the Secretary has said on this matter.

Secretary McNamara: We cannot win the war with bombing in the north. We need action in South Vietnam supplemented by bombing in the north with limited objectives. Bombing is a supplement to, not a substitute.

The great danger is to lead our people to think we can win the war overnight with bombing. We cannot.

The President: We do have differences of opinion. And there has never been a time when we had fewer disagreements with our Joint Chiefs of Staff than we have now.

There are less than two dozen targets we disagree on. These are in the port of Haiphong and in Hanoi.

Congressman Mahon: You should keep the pressure on. Continue the bombing.

Senator Long: Don't stop the bombing. If anything, step it up. Anytime you want to lose a war you can. If we lose Vietnam we lose influence in this entire area of the world. We must make a stand here.

Senator Smith: I don't see any good coming out of our other pauses. Stand firm is my position. I don't know the President's alternatives but I don't think you should stop the bombing. I have a great admiration for the firm stand you have taken.

Senator Byrd: You can't do more than you've done. If anything, you have been overly eager. I am not surprised these people feel the way they do.

These people have every reason to believe they should hold out until the next election. I hope you continue to be firm. I hope you try to work through the U.N. If you feel what you are doing is right I hope you continue to do it. You may lose next year's election because of it, but I believe that history will vindicate you.

Senator Sparkman: You have done all you could. I think you should stand firm.

Senator Mansfield: I am not in accord on the matter of the effectiveness of the bombing. We could bomb North Vietnam into the stone age if we wanted to. I do not believe we have reached the objective, which was stopping the flow of men and material into the South. We have lost many planes and we are flying within 24 seconds of China. I think there is much to what Senator Cooper said. We should think of contact between the NLF and Saigon to try to cut them out from North Vietnam.

Do not be fooled by the internal disturbances in China either.

The President: There were three objectives for the bombings:

(1) To raise the morale of the South Vietnamese. We have done that.

(2) To cause North Vietnam to pay a price at home for its aggression. We have done that.

(3) To make more costly the flow of men and material into the South. The bombing has made it much more costly.

Senator Byrd: Are the Viet Cong running short of ammunition?

Secretary McNamara: No.

Secretary Rusk: Last year we listed 28 public proposals to the Hanoi government. We gave an affirmative response to all of these. Hanoi said no to each of them. Interspersed with these 28 proposals were a number of private contacts.

This most recent contact began in mid-August. In the past there have always been some discussions about counter proposals.

Now Hanoi has said that there is nothing new to say. There is no reason to talk again.

The President: There was a man who sat across this very table last week. He went and talked with intermediaries who are in contact with the North Vietnamese.

Secretary Rusk: Their response was simple: "The situation is worsening. There is no reason to try again."

The President: We pursued this channel religiously. We are trying all we can. We will try again.

Congressman Albert: I would tell them to jump in the lake. We must continue to do what we have to do.⁸

⁸ On October 28 the President received a memorandum from McPherson offering counter-arguments to continued bombing. In it, McPherson told Johnson that many Democrats who supported the war effort "have grown increasingly edgy about the bombing program." The bombardment of the North had many unfortunate consequences, including the fact that it diverted attention from the war in the South, generated negative public and international hostility, and acted as an obstacle to peace. McPherson suggested that the President limit the bombing to the extreme southern portion of the DRV and indefinitely discontinue bombing around Hanoi and Haiphong. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, March 19, 1970 Memo to the President) The President talked with McPherson on the telephone at 2:45 p.m. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary) No record of the conversation has been found.

365. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, October 24, 1967, 1215Z.

9433. For the Secretary from Bunker. Ref: State 58070;² Saigon 9310.³

1. I saw General Thieu at 9:00 a.m. October 24 to discuss further efforts in the direction of negotiations and a peaceful settlement. I spoke to him along the following lines:

"My authorities in Washington have expressed their appreciation for the information you furnished me last week about a possible message to Ho Chi Minh following your inauguration. We agree fully with your view that it would be advisable to avoid the kind of message that would either be read in Hanoi as an ultimatum or elsewhere in the world as purely a propaganda move. We believe that serious peace initiatives by the newly elected government in Viet-Nam can be an important contribution to the allied position directed toward peace, and we are therefore gratified that you are giving serious thought to how your campaign pledges can be pursued and a more flexible position on the peace issue developed.

We consider that it is vital for us to continue our close consultations on this subject. As our consultations proceed, we hope that you will limit the discussion of this important matter to the smallest possible circle of trusted advisors. We will do the same. I would appreciate knowing the persons with whom you will normally be discussing these subjects, and assume that General Ky and Foreign Minister Do will be among them. On my side, Ambassador Locke and Mr. Calhoun will be kept informed by me.

You may have seen the recent article filed by Wilfred Burchett from Hanoi, but I have brought with me a copy of the full text in case you have not. This article seems to us an important public indicator of Hanoi's position. A North Vietnamese representative in another capi-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA. Top Secret; Immediate; Nodis; Pennsylvania. Received at 9:33 a.m. In an October 24 covering note transmitting a copy of the telegram to the President, Rostow wrote: "Herewith, with his usual lucidity, Amb. Bunker handles Thieu on his inaugural formal on negotiations and a pause. Thieu accepts the idea of no pause without a prior understanding along San Antonio lines." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Pennsylvania) The notation "L" on the covering note indicates that the President saw the telegram.

² See footnote 3, Document 361.

³ Dated October 23. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA)

tal told a third-country diplomat only a few days before its publication to watch closely for it. We therefore believe it has special significance and clear authority from Hanoi. As we interpret the article, it represents a clear rejection of any possibility for cessation of the bombing except on the original terms of the January 28 interview between Foreign Minister Trinh and Burchett.⁴ These terms provided that the bombing should be stopped permanently with only vague possibility of talks and with no indication of military restraint on Hanoi's part. This new article clearly conveys the present hard mood of the leaders in Hanoi.

For your personal information, you should know that reliable third-country intermediaries have been in contact with Hanoi during the past six weeks using the kind of formula expressed by Ambassador Goldberg and President Johnson and including also the possibility of a lesser reduction in hostilities combined with preliminary contacts. These efforts reached a clearly negative conclusion at the same time the Burchett article was published, with the Hanoi representative finally indicating an unwillingness even to talk further with the intermediaries. This private contact has completely confirmed our impression of a clearly negative position on the part of Hanoi toward any acceptable formula for stopping the bombing and probably more broadly toward any avenue to peace at the present time.

We have been considering the alternatives mentioned by you last week in the light of these developments. We believe that your first alternative should be the only one used at this time. Our understanding of this alternative is that you would limit yourself to general statements on peace in your inaugural address and would confine your message to Ho Chi Minh to an expression of desire for a peaceful settlement and for direct discussions to achieve that end. If this produced a favorable response you would then ask us to halt the bombing and we would assume that reciprocal action would be forthcoming from the other side. Since we believe the Burchett article will be read in a negative sense by most responsible opinion throughout the world, we believe that an offer to Ho along the lines of your second alternative, a halt in the bombing to be followed promptly by a message to Ho proposing immediate talks, would be widely regarded as only a propaganda gesture. We are sure that you would wish to avoid this reaction and we are furthermore inclined to believe that such a message in present circumstances might well be interpreted in Hanoi as a sign of weakness. In considering the alternative courses which you suggested, we have concluded that the first alternative would put your government in a favorable light internationally as well as within Viet-Nam,

⁴ See Document 29.

since it would highlight the contrast between Hanoi's intransigence and Saigon's reasonableness.

My authorities in Washington would like to know immediately your reactions to these comments and your own plans for handling this important matter. We are considering what further action might be taken in this situation and would of course want to take your views into account in determining them. I plan also to talk with General Ky about this matter in the very near future."

2. Thieu said he agreed entirely that the first alternative proposed by him in our conversation October 13 was preferable. He said he plans to speak in general terms in his inaugural address October 31, expressing a desire for peaceful settlement, his readiness to talk with Hanoi leaders and to keep the door open. If there is a favorable response and indication of Hanoi's willingness to take reciprocal action then he would seek a bombing pause.

3. Thieu said he would like our advice on a number of aspects of his course of action. Following his inaugural address he would plan to send a letter to Ho appealing to the latter's conscience, stating that the Vietnamese people have suffered for many years from war and it is in the interest of all of the Vietnamese people that the two of them should meet and talk about what might be done to end hostilities. Thieu added that the letter would be couched in terms which would not be construed as either an ultimatum or as escalation. He said he would make clear that as far as he is concerned the doors will remain open.

4. Thieu said several questions arise. First is the method of transmission of the letter. He saw several possibilities: (1) to send it through the ICC; (2) to have it transmitted through Prime Minister Sato who had offered his assistance during his October 21 visit; (3) to use the GVN's own channels through NVN representatives in other capitals. Thieu wondered whether other personalities might be of assistance or be better than one of the foregoing channels. He seemed to have no strong preference among them, and would like to have our advice.

5. A second question related to how and when other countries should be informed of this communication. Thieu anticipated Ho would reject his letter and move to exploit it publicly as propaganda to strengthen the morale of NVN forces and population. From his own viewpoint, Thieu thought its principal value would be to establish publicly the new GVN's desire for peace and its flexibility in achieving this aim. Thieu seemed to have no pronounced preference for public release by the GVN or awaiting publication by Ho, and he wished our views.

6. Thieu agreed entirely that knowledge of these matters would be restricted very closely on both sides. He seemed to agree that Prime Minister Ky and Foreign Minister Do should be involved on the GVN side, although he was not explicit on whom he would consult.

7. *Comment:* I plan to talk with Prime Minister Ky later today on this subject and will report any views he may have. It seems to me that Thieu's ideas are very much in line with our own and I would appreciate early instructions from the Department on the points on which Thieu asked our advice.

8. The general tenor of Thieu's letter sounds eminently reasonable and I shall attempt to get a copy of his draft as soon as he has one worked out. On the matter of channels for transmitting the letter to Ho, I do not see any overriding considerations arguing for one means or another. I am inclined to see some advantage in having it done through the GVN's own channels direct NVN representatives in a third country, since this would be consistent with our own earlier direct contact with NVN representatives and would be a logical way to try and open a dialogue. It does of course invite a refusal to accept such a letter but this would probably be true no matter what channel is used.

9. I agree with Thieu that in the present Hanoi mood, Ho Chi Minh will probably reject the letter and seek to exploit it for his own internal purposes. It would seem advantageous for Thieu to leave publication to Ho's initiative since this would underline the sincerity of his approach and not make it look like a propaganda gesture. If Ho does not release it over a period of time, however, it may be necessary for Thieu to make a public move since the press is fully aware of his plans and will be pressing him to see whether he has sent such a communication. For this reason I think it would be best to keep open the possibility that after a certain lapse of time, Thieu would indicate publicly that he has sent such a letter, and ultimately would release its text if he has not had a reaction from Hanoi which would argue otherwise.

10. Department will be the best judge of what other countries, if any, should be kept informed at this stage, and whether there are other possible channels for transmitting Thieu's letter which might be better than those suggested by him.

Bunker

366. Telegram From the Central Intelligence Agency to the White House¹

Washington, October 26, 1967, 1038Z.

Fm Ambassador Bunker 264. To Walt Rostow Priority.

1. Although I welcome the prospect of a personal meeting with the President to take a look at where we are and where we should be going, I have some reservations about the suggestion for a weekend meeting at Honolulu beginning November 3.

2. The entire top echelon of the Mission is largely tied up in preparations for the visit of the Vice President and the U.S. delegation to the inauguration and will be completely occupied from the time of the Vice President's arrival on Sunday, October 29, through the afternoon of Wednesday, November 1, when the Vice President departs from Danang. This leaves inadequate time for preparation for meeting such as proposed. In spite of the fact that we try to keep Washington fully informed of developments here and of our recommended plans, programs, and procedures, to achieve adequate and compensatory returns from such a meeting we would want to pull together much data and material.

3. I have reported in my last several weekly messages and in other messages the increasing sensitivity here at all levels to appearances of U.S. pressure on the Vietnamese Government. I do not question the need to apply pressure or leverage as the case may be. The question is how it is done. It is important to form a judgment in each case as to what method will be most effective in achieving results, e.g., persuasion, urging, prodding, leverage, or pressure, and the form in which the method should be applied. In view of the characteristic pride (not exclusive to the Vietnamese but existing generally in most underdeveloped countries) and increasing susceptibility to public evidence of U.S. pressure, it is my feeling that we obtain results most effectively and rapidly by exerting the above methods as quietly and privately as possible. They are most effective when they have been applied in such a way that the ideas, programs, and projects appear to be coming as

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, I E(1), Post Inaugural Political Activity. Top Secret; Literally Eyes Only; Via CAS Channels. Received in the White House at 12:25 p.m. In his attached covering note transmitting the telegram to the President, Rostow wrote: "Herewith Amb. Bunker's back channel response to my message to him, also attached. I am making it available, on an eyes only basis, to Sec. Rusk and to Sec. McNamara." The notation "L" on the note indicates that the President saw the telegram. Rostow's message to Bunker has not been found, but presumably it asked Bunker to consider a meeting with the President.

ideas proposed by the Vietnamese themselves. I believe that we have been increasingly able to do this and I am convinced that we should continue to work in this way with the new government when the spotlight, with the Assembly in existence and functioning, will be more concentrated on what we do and how we do it.

4. As you know, we have had to press the GVN leadership rather hard recently on a number of important and urgent questions. This fact will become evident as certain of these actions are taken. In view of the sensitivity I have mentioned, which has been evident during the recent election campaigns and from the full and frank criticism in the uncensored Vietnamese press, a high-level meeting at Honolulu immediately after the inauguration of the new government is likely to be interpreted here and outside as new efforts to apply strong pressure on the new Vietnamese Government. This could strengthen criticism and give credence to those who have already labeled the GVN as a U.S. puppet. It might well cause embarrassment to the new government and their friends just as it is getting under way. Its reaction might well be that it had not been freely given the chance to get organized and moving.

5. In such a session we would of course be discussing precisely that, namely, how to get the new government organized and moving, and this is why I believe it would be far preferable to do this in a way which would not appear publicly to be what it is. I recognize that your needs at home are different from the requirements of our situation in Saigon, but I hope you will appreciate the importance of keeping the atmosphere here as undisturbed as possible during this critical new period.

6. An alternative, and it seems to be preferable, would be to hold a meeting such as proposed in Washington rather than in Honolulu a week or two weeks later, say November 10th or 17th. This would give time for adequate preparation, and the fact of our presence in Washington could be handled as more or less a normal, routine consultation after the new team has been here six months. In fact, I wrote yesterday, before receiving your message, to Dean Rusk suggesting that I return in November about that time for consultation to take up with President, you, Dean, and Bob McNamara a number of things relating to policy and programs here both regarding our own efforts and the programs of the new government.

7. I pass these thoughts on to you as my best judgment as to what would be the most productive and useful procedure as seen from this end.

Bunker

367. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam¹

Washington, October 26, 1967, 2346Z.

60458. Ref: Saigon 9433, 9653.² For Bunker from the Secretary.

1. Though the final choice of a channel for transmittal of the message is one for Thieu we offer the following thoughts:

a) While we agree with your judgment that any channel of transmittal is likely to result in refusal by Hanoi to accept the message, we think that such a rejection is most likely if Saigon tries to deliver it directly to North Vietnamese representatives. We are concerned such a direct rejection might result in loss of face by the GVN.

b) Use of the Japanese channel would offer the following advantages: (1) engaging an important Asian nation and perhaps thus making the effort appear to others as more serious, (2) decreasing the likelihood of rejection by Hanoi and (3) minimizing the loss of face to SVN as it would be the Japanese who would bear the insult in the first instance.

c) We are uncertain whether India in its ICC capacity would agree to transmit the message but think that India or Canada could be considered as possible channels.

2. We think the question of public release of the message by the GVN can best be considered after we know Hanoi's rejection or reaction. Until then it is important that secrecy be preserved.

3. If possible we would hope that you and we can review draft which Thieu proposes to transmit and have opportunity to make suggestions.³

Rusk

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA. Top Secret; Flash; Nodis; Pennsylvania. Drafted by Davidson; cleared by Harriman, Read, and Bundy; and approved by Katzenbach.

² Telegram 9433 is Document 365. In telegram 9653 from Saigon, October 26, Bunker reported his intention to see Thieu on October 27 and requested Department comment. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Pennsylvania)

³ In telegram 9751 from Saigon, October 27, Bunker replied that Thieu assented to "our hope that he would only make the most general reference in his inaugural address to his desire to achieve a peaceful settlement and his willingness to meet with Hanoi for this purpose." Thieu also expressed interest in using the Japanese Government as an intermediary. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA)

368. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, October 26, 1967.

Mr. President:

This is one way to look at the war.

From Hanoi's point of view there are two central facts:

- the decline of the Viet Cong manpower base;
- the possibility of a political break in the United States.

Hanoi's purpose, therefore, is to buy time to see what U.S. politics may yield. Hanoi has attempted to achieve this purpose by:

- reducing activity in II, III, and IV Corps;
- increasing pressure in the DMZ area to (1) prevent a more rapid erosion of the communist structure and (2) inflict higher U.S. casualties in hopes of eroding the U.S. will.

Hanoi's strategy has been only partially successful—but extremely costly, in that:

—Revolutionary development progress has been slowed as a result of the diversion of U.S. forces to I Corps—but it has not been stopped.

—U.S. losses have increased substantially (7,000 killed in action in nine months against 5,000 all last year)—but for every American killed they have had more than nine deaths.

—Total friendly casualties have also increased (15,600 killed in nine months compared with 11,100 for the same period in 1966)—but they have suffered disproportionately (the kill rate is now 4.26 against them compared with 3.2 in the same period in 1966).

—Despite their increased losses in I Corps (and higher kill ratios against them in I Corps), they have been unable to cut their losses in the other corps areas (April through August losses equalled 25,800 compared with 18,400 for the same period last year. Monthly average was 5,200 compared with 4,900 for the preceding 15 months).

—North Vietnamese losses have probably increased more than VC losses.

In the meantime, the intensity of the fighting in I Corps has tended to obscure the fact that the over-all pace of the war has slowed down:

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 3L(1) NVN Leadership Attitudes. Secret. According to the President's notation on the memorandum, he requested that it be put on his desk.

—Communist-initiated incidents in I Corps have increased from 20% of the total to 26%—but the total incident rate is down about 30% from the peak.

—Battalion-size contacts in I Corps have increased from 34% of the total to 66%—but the total rate is down 55%.

—Small unit actions and contacts per quarter in I Corps have increased from 600 to 3,000. In the other corps areas they have decreased from the peak of 1,900 to 1,500.

—September death rates are substantially down from their peaks this spring: U.S. rate is down from 1,233 to 775; South Vietnamese, from 1,026 to 740; enemy, from 9,351 to 6,354.

It is too early to tell whether the current “lull” will be followed by a renewal of intense fighting in I Corps or whether Hanoi will now change its strategy.

Hanoi may feel that its DMZ strategy has been too costly in terms of its limited gains. If so, their alternatives are:

- negotiate with or without a continuation of the fighting;
- retreat from stage III to stage II insurgency (fragmentary evidence indicates that this process may be underway in some areas);
- switch their main effort from the DMZ to some other areas;
- a combination of the above.

On the other hand, Hanoi may well decide to pursue its DMZ strategy despite its high cost, because:

- they simply are not yet ready to quit;
- even though it is a “losing” strategy, it may buy more time at less cost than other alternatives (Hanoi may calculate that they would have suffered even more if they had not adopted the DMZ strategy);
- for a time, at least, the communists may be prepared to exchange 7,200 killed a month for 800 American deaths (or 1,700 friendly deaths) if they believe that their will to persist is that much stronger than ours.

Walt

369. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, October 28, 1967, 7 a.m.

Mr. President:

Before you leave for El Paso,² you should know:

1. We received yesterday a reply from our first NLF contact on which Dick Helms' people had been working in Saigon for many, many months.³

2. It is now being carefully translated, but here are the elements, as I recall them without benefit of even a rough text in front of me.

—It starts with prisoners, for that was the origin of the exchange.

—It asks that one man held by the GVN be released and a list of others be "well treated."

—It then moves on to discussion of a settlement of the war.

—Almost like a Planning Council paper, it says there are, essentially, three negotiations to be envisaged: a negotiation on the political settlement within South Vietnam; a U.S.–Hanoi negotiation; and a negotiation, which is pushed some distance down the road, between the North and the South.

—It states the four points with, superficially, a softening of the critical point, because it does not demand that the NLF be the sole voice speaking for South Vietnam.

—Here is the hooker: It states vehemently that under no circumstances will they deal with Thieu–Ky and Company. They want the political negotiation to begin between the NLF and the U.S. They name Dzu and a few others as the kind of South Vietnamese they are willing to work with.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Buttercup, Vol. I (B). Top Secret; Sensitive. The notation "PS" on the memorandum indicates that the President saw it.

² The President left for his ranch in Texas on October 28 and returned to Washington on October 30. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary)

³ See footnote 4, Document 341. After making contact with Tran Bach Dang, the VC intermediary Truong Dinh Tong returned to Saigon on October 26 with Dang's letter of reply approved by COSVN. This letter included a request for the release of 10 prisoners held by the GVN and a restatement of the NLF platform. The text of the letter is attached to a memorandum from Helms to Rostow, October 30. (Central Intelligence Agency, Executive Registry Subject Files, Job 80–R01580R, Vietnam)

—In tone it is very tough in the sense that it says we must recognize that they are winning the war.

—The intermediary, whom we released to make contact at a Viet Cong headquarters area, reports his judgment that the message was checked in Hanoi.

Again, this is a document that was read aloud to me yesterday, which has not been carefully translated yet. We shall, of course, be studying it over the weekend.

My first reflections are:

—It is the first piece of paper we have received from the other side which goes directly to the heart of the matter which is political settlement inside South Vietnam.

—It comes, as we always thought a truly serious probe would come, while the war proceeds, including a full-scale bombing of North Vietnam.

—It raises the gut issue of what we are fighting for in South Vietnam by posing the question of Thieu–Ky. (My first reaction is, for what it is worth, that we shall have to stand firmly by the constitutional process in South Vietnam and find out if, when we and they have been fully tested, they are prepared to accept a role as a political party under the constitution when they lay down their arms.)

The intermediary is now being put through a polygraph test in Saigon to establish whether his story, the details of which are quite interesting, is true.⁴

Walt

⁴ In addition to the polygraph tests, the veracity of the message was ascertained by examining the handwriting in the note and by attempting to corroborate Tong's travel dates with observations he made about the times of U.S. artillery barrages. (Telegram CAS 4636, November 15; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–7 VIET S/BUTTERCUP)

370. Telegram From the Central Intelligence Agency to the White House¹

Washington, October 28, 1967, 1111Z.

Fm Amb Bunker 325. To the White House, eyes only Rostow.

1. I understand that DOD has approved draft press briefing on new VC/NVA order of battle picture and sent it to White House for final approval.

2. One aspect of it still bothers General Westmoreland, Bob Komer and myself. Given the overriding need to demonstrate our progress in grinding down the enemy, it is essential that we do not drag too many red herrings across the trail. Thus referring to old estimates of the shadowy Self-Defense and Secret Self-Defense Forces, and then saying we have dropped them from the order of battle it seems to me is simply to invite trouble. We may end up with stories that enemy strength is greater rather than less. Far better in our view to deal with this matter orally if it arises.

3. We also note that some confusion can arise from stating that the old estimate of 100–120,000 irregulars is divided into one-third guerrillas and two-thirds SDF and SSDF. This implies that we estimated 40,000 guerrillas in 1966. Since our new estimate is 70–90,000, a big increase is suggested, whereas we think actual guerrilla strength has declined. Our new guerrilla figures, adjusted retroactively, indicate that the guerrilla strength alone totaled 110–150,000 in December 1966.

4. I suggest that in the discussion of the strength figures for the old category of “irregulars” that we merely say that this figure contained guerrillas and other personnel of no military importance, and that our new figure carried guerrillas only. This short explanation will forestall many confusing and undesirable questions.

5. Sorry to badger you again on this, but the credibility gap is such that we don’t want to end up conveying the opposite of what we intend.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 7E1(a), Public Relations Activities. Secret; Eyes Only; Via CAS Channels. Received in the White House at 2:25 a.m.

371. Telegram From the Central Intelligence Agency to the Station in Saigon¹

Washington, October 28, 1967, 1934Z.

CAS 47716. Pls deliver following message strictly eyes only, repeat strictly eyes only to Bunker from Secretary.

"1. All of us here are of course deeply interested in the report through this channel of message from Tong. We are awaiting Station interpretation and your comments as you see fit, before going further on nature of response.

"2. However, it strikes us all at once that it is vitally important, unless there is some factor of which we are not aware, for you to inform Thieu at once of this development. We assume he already knows about the outgoing message from our side, and it is obvious that if anything should develop in the field of prisoner exchange we would have to consult very closely with them on all aspects. Moreover, the broader second half of the message may conceivably be known and more likely become known to them, and it looks to us virtually impossible to separate this broader second half from the questions of prisoner exchange in which the GVN would be inextricably involved. Furthermore, time looks to us to be of the essence in terms of GVN confidence in our actions.

"3. Thus, we believe you should see Thieu in private just as soon as possible to inform him of at least the general nature of the response. If he should then designate someone to work with us on the details, we could thereafter give the whole story to that man. However, our inclination would be in the direction of a total and verbatim disclosure to Thieu right at the outset.

"4. Please act accordingly unless you have some overriding contrary reason, in which case advise us at once. Please give us a full report of what you have told Thieu if you do go ahead.

"5. We are meeting further on this Sunday² morning our time, to review information and thoughts available here. It would naturally be most helpful to have Station and your interpretation and comments at that time if you are in position to handle it.

"6. If you see Thieu at once, question may naturally arise whether this development should in any way affect contents of his inaugural

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–7 VIET S/BUTTERCUP. Top Secret; Nodis; Buttercup. Released by Colby and cleared by Bundy following a telephone consultation with Marvin Watson of the White House staff.

² October 29.

speech. While we continue to hope that he can say something along line of reconciliation, we believe any dramatic new message at this moment, going beyond what has been foreshadowed, might be read by the senders of Tong's message as a specific reply from the GVN, whom they may believe would not be fully informed at this stage. Hence, our net conclusion is not to urge Thieu to take any special account whatever of this development in his inaugural speech plans."³

³ For a summary of President Thieu's inaugural speech of October 31, see Document 379.

372. Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (Bundy) to Secretary of State Rusk¹

Washington, October 31, 1967.

SUBJECT

Implications of RT-58 and General JCS Bombing Strategy

In the customary manner, I have given you our best judgment on the 11 targets proposed in RT-58,² and on the rather drastic changes in ground rules proposed by the JCS.

However, I have the distinct feeling, from actually reading the JCS back-up material in full, that much more is involved than a sorting out of targets week by week.

Specifically, the JCS justification asserts that there is now "successful interdiction" of the northeast rail line, and holds out the distinct hope that a progressive series of attacks on transportation targets in the Hanoi and Haiphong areas may actually isolate one city from the other, and thus presumably cut off a second major link in the entry of supplies into North Viet-Nam.

Both of these points seem to me open to the most serious doubt, and at any rate to require outside examination perhaps by CIA. My own hunch would be that traffic over the northeast rail line continues

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Top Secret; Nodis. A copy was sent to Katzenbach.

² This target list, authorized on October 23, included several targets that had never before been attacked due to a prior prohibition on targets in the Hanoi area. See Document 364.

to operate at well above the tonnage levels required to sustain the effort in the South, and almost certainly at tonnage levels that can support a full air defense effort in the North as well. Secondly, my own hunch is strongly against any hope that we can really cut off shipment from Haiphong to Hanoi. I am supported in this by recent intelligence on the development of alternate water routes of all sorts between the two cities, supplementing the road and rail lines—which in any event I doubt can be prevented from carrying major traffic.

In other words, I think the JCS are drastically overselling the military advantage of the Hanoi and Haiphong transportation targets that now appear to be the major element in their proposals. At most, I would suppose, subject to check, we are making traffic handling significantly more difficult. This is all fine as a matter of degree, but it does mean that the military advantage is solely that and not at all what the JCS are depicting it.

Against this, we now have extensive reporting suggesting that there may be significant civilian damage in both Haiphong and Hanoi. AFP is being carried in the *New York Times* to this effect, and I believe our own photos show quite significant numbers of houses and residential areas hit. To take each target on the basis of whether it involves 20 or 50 estimated civilian casualties—always a dangerous matter at best—is to ignore the cumulative effect of strikes in the pattern the JCS are now apparently proposing. Little by little, we may well be making large areas of Haiphong and Hanoi uninhabitable—and we could quite well wake up one morning to find some new American visitor reporting dramatically to this effect.

Thus, I conclude that we are at something of a crossroads on this issue and that we need some careful study before we move significantly further along the lines of the JCS proposals. I think we particularly need an immediate CIA assessment of the actual effect on traffic into Haiphong and its distribution, and secondly a careful study of the pictures and an assessment of what we are actually doing in terms of civilian damage. I strongly urge that you take up these points with Secretary McNamara, perhaps through a copy of this memorandum.

W P Bundy

373. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam¹

Washington, October 31, 1967, 0107Z.

62070. For Ambassador.

1. You have doubtless noted fact that Senator Mansfield has introduced a resolution in the Senate, with 54 additional Senators as co-sponsors, that would express the sense of the Senate that the United Nations should be asked to act on the Viet-Nam question. Resolution does not specify exact type of action, but refers to resolutions along the lines of that we put forward in February of 1966.²

2. Bui Diem called on Bundy today to ask Administration position on this resolution. He replied frankly along following lines:

a. With 55 sponsors already in hand, it seemed virtually certain that resolution of this type would pass. Thus it would be very difficult for Administration to take negative view in any event.

b. While final decision at Presidential level had not been taken, it was possible that Ambassador Goldberg would appear before Senate Foreign Relations Committee before the end of this week and take position along following lines:

(1) Start by giving history of past attempts to obtain useful and even-handed action by UNSC.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S/UN. Secret; Immediate; Exdis. Drafted and approved by Bundy and cleared by Rostow.

² Mansfield signaled his intent to submit such a resolution in an October 9 letter to the President, to which he attached a copy of a letter he sent to members of the Senate requesting their support for the measure. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Walt Rostow, Mansfield, Senator Mike) Introduced as Senate Resolution 180 by Mansfield on October 25, the legislation as written stated the Senate's desire for the President to "consider taking the appropriate initiative through his representative at the United Nations to assure that the United States resolution of 31 January 1966 or any other resolution of equivalent purpose be brought before the Security Council for consideration." For text, see *Congressional Record*, Vol. 113, p. 30024. The 1966 draft resolution called for an immediate discussion of the Vietnam question accompanied by a cessation of hostilities. For texts of Ambassador Goldberg's January 31, 1966, transmittal letter to the President of the Security Council and the draft resolution, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1966*, pp. 760–762. Senator Wayne Morse (D-OR) introduced another resolution, Senate Concurrent Resolution 144, on September 11, which was considered at the same time but passed over. The resolution advised the administration to seek a binding consideration of the war in the Security Council, and if that failed, in the General Assembly.

(2) Indicate that Administration was prepared to continue these efforts and therefore had no problem with resolution supporting such continuation.³

c. Bundy then noted that practical problem of any further action in UN had not yet been worked out and would require careful consideration—even as to further private consultation—of such factors as a hostile Security Council Chairman in the month of November, the difficulty of obtaining nine votes for an even-handed resolution, and similar elements. Bundy clearly said that any follow-up action would be taken only after these factors had been weighed and after we had had normal consultation with GVN. Thus, all that was involved this week was the possible taking of a forthcoming Administration position on the Senate resolution.

d. We regretted that Senate action at this moment might force us to take position that could appear to GVN and South Vietnamese as in some sense an independent US peace action at this particular moment, when both of us had hoped focus could be on GVN inauguration. Moreover, we were conscious of sentiment in SVN that US might appear to be acting unilaterally. One possible remedy might be appropriate GVN statement at some time that it had always welcomed even-handed UN action, in contrast with DRV rejection of UN competence.

3. FYI: Exact Administration position will be further worked out in the next day or two, and we may then be able to give you more precise instructions. However, Bui Diem report may well lead to further inquiries, to which you should respond along lines above. We leave to your discretion whether matter should be raised affirmatively with Thieu in any fashion. You should of course inform Vice President.⁴ End FYI.

Rusk

³ In telegram 1789 from USUN, October 27, Goldberg advised Rusk that the administration should "embrace Mansfield res and react positively to it." (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET) In telegram 61575 to the President in Texas, October 29, Rusk agreed that the administration had to support the resolution. "My own judgment is that it is tactically far better for us to take the view that the Senate resolution crawls upon your coattails rather than that you are being pressed by the Senate to do something which you are reluctant to do." (Ibid.) Related documentation is scheduled for publication in *Foreign Relations*, 1964–1968, volume XXXIII. On November 30 the Senate unanimously adopted the resolution. For text, see *Congressional Record*, Vol. 113, pp. 34348–34364. Goldberg testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on November 2; his strong support for the resolution was reflected in his testimony: "It is my considered view as the U.S. Representative to the United Nations that the adoption of Senator Mansfield's resolution at this time will support the efforts I have been making at the United Nations at the direction of the President to enlist the Security Council in the search for peace in Vietnam." For text of Goldberg's remarks, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1967, pp. 1015–1021.

⁴ Humphrey was on a visit to Vietnam and other nations at the time.

The Wise Men's Meeting of November 1 and Planning To Stay the Course, November–December

374. Editorial Note

On November 1, 1967, Under Secretary of State Katzenbach submitted to Secretary of State Rusk a report entitled "Prognosis for Vietnam." The purpose of the study, compiled on an interagency basis, was to make projections of progress in the war 1 year hence if current policies and programs were continued. The report consisted of a section on politics authored by State Department analysts, an economic projection by the Agency for International Development and William Leonhart of the National Security Council Staff, an analysis by the Central Intelligence Agency on the anti-Viet Cong infrastructure effort, and a final section by Leonhart examining pacification. In the covering memorandum, Katzenbach distilled the conclusions of the study:

"In briefest summation, there is a consensus that one year from now we will be stronger than we are now, making continued progress against the VC, and slowly building up the GVN—but that there will not have been a decisive and undeniable breakthrough, that the enemy will still be very much with us, that it will remain difficult to produce dramatic and convincing evidence of a victory in the near future."

The full text of the study is in the National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Bundy Files: Lot 85 D 240, Top Secret WPB Chron., Nov./Dec. 1967.

375. Draft Memorandum From Secretary of Defense McNamara to President Johnson¹

Washington, November 1, 1967.

SUBJECT

A Fifteen Month Program for Military Operations in Southeast Asia

This memorandum explores the likely consequences if we go ahead with our presently planned course of action in Vietnam and considers whether more promising alternatives exist. The purpose is to begin to focus for your decision the actions we should take over the next 15 months in order to achieve the maximum progress towards our objectives in the South while retaining the maximum domestic and international support for our efforts.

In Section I, "Outlook If Present Course of Action is Continued," I state my opinion that continuing on our present course will not bring us by the end of 1968 enough closer to success, in the eyes of the American public, to prevent the continued erosion of popular support for our involvement in Vietnam.

In Section II, "Possible Alternative Courses of Action," I examine both a halt in the bombing and an expansion of our military operations as alternative means of achieving our political objectives in Vietnam.

In Section III, "Recommendations," I state my belief that we should announce a policy of stabilization of our military effort indicating that we plan no further increase in our forces in South Vietnam, and no expansion of our operations against North Vietnam. This posture would help to convince Hanoi that we are prepared to stay in Vietnam as long as necessary, and that we are resigned to a long struggle. It would also

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 2EE Primarily McNamara Recommendations. Top Secret; Sensitive. The memorandum was marked as a draft as a means of eliciting opinion on its content; see footnote 1, Document 177. In the attached covering note, McNamara wrote: "Yesterday at lunch I stated my belief that continuation of our present action in Southeast Asia would be dangerous, costly in lives, and unsatisfactory to the American people. The attached memorandum outlines an alternative program. The memo represents my personal views. Because these may be incompatible with your own, I have not shown the paper to Dean Rusk, Walt Rostow or Bus Wheeler. After you have read it, if you wish me to discuss my proposals with them and report back to you our joint recommendations, I will do so." In his memoirs, McNamara asserted that this memorandum served to "do one thing: it raised the tension between two men who loved and respected each other—Lyndon Johnson and me—to the breaking point." On November 29 the President announced that McNamara would step down as Secretary of Defense at a later unspecified date and would be nominated for the post of President of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (also known as the World Bank). See McNamara's *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam*, pp. 311–314.

increase support for the war at home by removing anxiety about possible increases in our activity. To further increase support for the war effort and to probe the possibilities of a negotiated settlement, I recommend we plan on a halt in the bombing of the North. And finally, I suggest we examine our military operations in the South with a view to taking steps which will reduce our casualties and increase the role of the Vietnamese.

I. Outlook If Present Course of Action Is Continued

1. *Expansion of Forces*

Under present plans, we will continue during the next 15 months gradually to expand the US and free world forces in South Vietnam. The number of American troops will, during this period, increase from the present level of 465,000 to 525,000 while the aggregate increase in other free world forces from outside South Vietnam will bring their total in the area from 59,000 to 75,000.

The additional numbers of combat troops will not produce any significant change in the nature of our military operations. The increase in numbers is likely to lead to a proportionate increase in encounters with the enemy, and some increase in the number of casualties inflicted on both sides. But neither the additional troops now scheduled nor augmentation of our forces by a much greater amount holds great promise of bringing the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces visibly closer to collapse during the next 15 months. Nonetheless, we will be faced with requests for additional ground forces requiring an increased draft and/or a call-up of reserves.

2. *US Ground Operations in South*

The military effort in the South would continue along the general lines now being pursued. US forces would be used along the DMZ and opposite the North Vietnamese staging areas in Cambodia and Laos. These forces would also be used in "search and destroy" operations against large enemy units and main base areas of the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army.

The South Vietnamese armed forces would continue to be used primarily for "secure and hold" operations and in support of pacification. There are no present plans to turn a larger share of the campaign against main enemy forces over to the South Vietnamese.

Accordingly, the present US casualty rate will probably increase if the present program is pursued. This would mean between 700 and 1,000 US killed in action every month, for a total during the fifteen months of 10,900 to 15,000 additional American dead and 30,000 to 45,000 additional wounded requiring hospitalization. This would bring

our total killed in action in the Vietnam campaign to somewhere between 24 and 30,000, close to the Korean total of 33,000, and 75,000 to 90,000 wounded requiring hospitalization.

Continuation of the North Vietnamese attack across the DMZ and use of Laotian and Cambodian territory will produce repeated requests for ground operations against the “sanctuary” areas.

3. Bombing Operations in the North

During the next 15 months, we would expect to run about 115,000 attack sorties against North Vietnamese targets, including approximately 12,000 attack sorties in the restricted areas of Hanoi and Haiphong.

Although no change in the nature of the bombing campaign against North Vietnam is contemplated, the continuing destruction of previously authorized targets will lead inexorably to requests for authority to attack more and more sensitive targets in the centers of Hanoi and Haiphong. There will, as the bombing attack proceeds, be increasing pressures to take direct action to prevent movement of matériel by sea into North Vietnam and to attack the irrigation dikes.

4. Pacification

Pacification efforts similarly would continue along the lines now being pursued. Better utilization of the South Vietnamese regular forces, regional forces and popular forces in the provision of security for the Revolutionary Development Teams would be attempted. Principal reliance for this improved performance would be placed on an increase in the number of US Advisors and some integration of US and Vietnamese forces. The chances of dramatic impact by any measurement of security are slim. The Pacification Program is moving forward but progress is slow and likely to remain slow.

5. Political Evolution

Although the development of the form of representative government has certainly been encouraging, it is not at all clear that the image or performance of this government over the next 15 months will make it appear to the US public to be a government worthy of continued US support in blood and treasure. A new government operating without parties or party discipline amid numerous competing cliques, is bound to have difficult going. It will be faced with hard political and economic decisions in meeting strong inflationary pressures in a disrupted country.

6. Probable Results of Present Course of Action

In South Vietnam, I believe that following the present course of action will bring continued but slow progress. However, I do not an-

ticipate that this progress will be readily visible to the general public either in the United States or abroad.

In North Vietnam, the bombing attacks have been unable to interrupt the flow of supplies and men needed to maintain the present level of enemy military action in the South. Whatever is done in the way of approving additional targets, improving our tactics or munitions, or reorienting the focus of our sorties, unless the “obstacle system” is spectacularly successful, there is little prospect that we will be able to cut off the men and ammunition needed to continue to inflict the present casualty rate on our forces.

Nor is there any reason to believe that the steady progress we are likely to make, the continued infliction of grievous casualties, or the heavy punishment of air bombardment will suffice to break the will of the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong to continue to fight. Nothing can be expected to break this will other than the conviction that they cannot succeed. This conviction will not be created unless and until they come to the conclusion that the US is prepared to remain in Vietnam for whatever period of time is necessary to assure the independent choice of the South Vietnamese people. The enemy cannot be expected to arrive at that conclusion in advance of the American public. And the American public, frustrated by the slow rate of progress, fearing continued escalation, and doubting that all approaches to peace have been sincerely probed, does not give the appearance of having the will to persist. As the months go by, there will be both increasing pressure for widening the war and continued loss of support for American participation in the struggle. There will be increasing calls for American withdrawal.

There is, in my opinion, a very real question whether under these circumstances it will be possible to maintain our efforts in South Vietnam for the time necessary to accomplish our objectives there.

II. Possible Alternative Courses of Action

In appraising alternatives, it is significant to review the list of military actions presented by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on October 17 in response to your request of September 12 for their recommendations of additional actions to bring the conflict to a speedy conclusion.² The striking fact is that none of them relate to our conduct of military operations in the South. Six would involve increased operations against North Vietnam—mining the ports and waterways, making greater use of our naval forces to attack North Vietnamese shipping and aircraft

² See footnote 12, Document 357.

and expanding bombing and covert programs. The other four involve extension of our activities in Laos and Cambodia. I do not think adoption of any or all of these proposals would bring us significantly closer to victory in the next 15 months.

There are obviously other possibilities for expansion of our military operations, both against North Vietnam and in South Vietnam. We might extend our efforts to eliminate aggression from the North by expanding the geographic scope of the ground conflict. We might intensify the bombing attack to try to break the will of the North to continue. But no further expansion seems likely to achieve sufficient visible progress in the next 15 months to assure the required public support. (See the Appendix for a discussion of ground action in North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia and air action against the ports and dikes.)³ And most programs of expanded military action carry major risks of widening the war.

The alternative possibilities lie in the stabilization of our military operations in the South (possibly with fewer US casualties) and of our air operations in the North, along with a demonstration that our air attacks on the North are not blocking negotiations leading to a peaceful settlement. The remainder of this memorandum deals with the use of a bombing halt for this purpose and the decisions that are associated with the stabilization of our military program.

(a) *Complete Cessation of Bombing in the North*

A decision to stop the bombing is a logical alternative to our present course in Vietnam. The bombing halt would have dual objectives. We would hope for a response from Hanoi, by some parallel reduction in its offensive activity, by a movement toward talks, or both. At a minimum, the lack of any response from Hanoi would demonstrate that it is North Vietnam and not the United States that is blocking a peaceful settlement.

If a halt is to be called in the bombing, we should be prepared to continue it indefinitely. During this time, however, we would plan to continue to bomb the infiltration trails in Laos.

After the bombing stops, we could expect Hanoi to repair roads and bridges, improve its anti-aircraft defenses and take other steps to be able to move supplies and men at reduced cost if the bombing resumes. During this period, Hanoi would of course be able to move supplies more openly and more economically toward the South. However, these actions would not necessarily increase the amount of support now provided to the enemy forces operating in the South, since our present air campaign does not limit this support to its present level.

³ Not printed.

Moreover, if artillery fire or other overt pressure from across the DMZ were to continue, we could establish a policy of returning fire, including air bombardment of their artillery positions. Hanoi, however, might well respond to our halt in the bombardment of the North by the cessation of artillery fire and large scale infiltration from across the DMZ. If this is its only product, the bombing halt would have achieved a major benefit in reduced US casualties.

If there were to be a substantial expansion of North Vietnam's operations in the South, either in general or only immediately south of the DMZ, we could resume our air attacks at such level as we saw fit.

We would have to anticipate strong resistance to any resumption. Many here and abroad will always argue that if we wait just a little longer negotiations leading to peaceful settlement will ensue. Politically, resumption will be extremely difficult if Hanoi has responded to the halt by substantial reduction of its offensive, whether or not accompanied by any movement toward talks. But if the halt has bought us an appreciable easing of North Vietnam's military pressure, resumption would be unnecessary and imprudent. In short, the difficulty of resuming will vary inversely with the amount of overt military action continued by North Vietnam. Restraint on its part will create the greatest pressure to continue the bombing halt but the least disadvantage in doing so.

If we halt the bombing without advance sign of reciprocal action and without setting a time limit, the North Vietnamese initially may conclude that the US resolve is weakening. They will be encouraged to believe that the course they have been following is correct. They will also recognize the risk that failure to respond to a bombing halt, either by reduction of the level of operations in the South or by entering into talks, might lead the US to resume bombing at intensified levels. The North Vietnamese leaders will expect considerable pressure to agree to talks, both from free world countries and from the Soviet Union, which will be aware that resumption and intensification of the bombing would face it with a difficult choice.

Suspension of the bombing, particularly for a prolonged period, must be expected to have some adverse effect on the morale both of non-Communist Vietnamese and of US troops fighting in the South.

In sum, a halt would have the following consequences:

1. It is probable⁴ that Hanoi would move to "talks," perhaps within a few weeks after the bombing stopped.

⁴ The President circled this word and wrote: "How do we get this conclusion?"

2. There is a strong possibility⁵ that, whether or not talks ensued, a halt would be accompanied by a cessation of enemy military activities across the DMZ.

3. Hanoi, at least initially, would be likely to use the talks for propaganda purposes rather than as a forum for serious negotiation.⁶

4. As the talks continue, however, the internal dynamics of the situation would create pressures and opportunities for both parties that might well result in productive discussions moving toward a settlement short of the total elimination of North Vietnam's intervention in the South but consistent with our objective of permitting the South Vietnamese to shape their own future.

5. If large scale shelling and infiltration across the DMZ does not stop, or if Hanoi prolongs fruitless discussions while taking military advantage, resumption of the bombing could be made acceptable to the majority of the American people.

6. At a minimum, we would have made clear that our bombing is not preventing peaceful political settlement.

(b) *Stabilization of Our Military Effort*

With or without a bombing halt, we could state clearly for both internal and public guidance our decision to stabilize our level of military effort in the absence of any major change in the enemy threat. The following elements would be involved in a decision to stabilize military operations:

1. No increase is to be made in US forces above the current approved level.

2. There will be no call up of reserves.

3. No expansion of ground action will be undertaken in North Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia.⁷

4. No attempt will be made to deny sea imports into North Vietnam.

5. No effort will be made to break the will of the North by an air campaign on the dikes, locks, or populated targets—efforts will be made to hold down civilian casualties in the North.

6. We will engage in continued efforts to restrict the war.

7. We will endeavor to maintain our current rates of progress but with lesser US casualties and lesser destruction in South Vietnam.

⁵ The President circled this phrase and wrote: "Chapter and Verse—Why believe this."

⁶ The President wrote at the end of the sentence: "I agree."

⁷ In the Appendix McNamara considered the expansion of the war in Southeast Asia. In arguing against such an expansion of operations, he noted that an invasion of the North, even just to clear out rocket sites near the DMZ, could bring about an intervention by combat troops from the PRC. Even if this intervention did not occur, the problem remained that in the secured areas any reduction in infiltration would be nullified as soon as U.S. troops withdrew. Likewise, neither would a ground action against NVA infiltration routes and staging areas in Laos and Cambodia prove beneficial. In addition, an intensification of the bombing attack against the territory of North Vietnam might hamper but would not prevent continued infiltration southward, would have little impact on the DRV's prosecution of the war as a whole, would risk confrontation with the Soviet Union, and would lead to intense domestic and international criticism.

8. We will be willing to accept slow but steady progress for whatever period is required to move the North Vietnamese to abandon their attempt to gain political control in South Vietnam by military means.

9. In light of the political progress of the GVN, we will gradually transfer the major burden of the fighting to the South Vietnamese forces.

In announcing this stabilization policy, we would have two objectives. First, we would hope to attract greater support by allaying apprehensions that the conflict would be expanded by our actions beyond Vietnam. Second, we would hope to increase pressure on Hanoi to enter into negotiations and/or to reduce their military efforts in the South.

III. Recommendations

I recommend that we:

1. Decide on, and announce, the policy of stabilization outlined above, that we assert that we are making slow but steady progress and expect to move ahead without expanding our operations against the North, and without increasing the size of our forces in the South beyond those already planned.

2. Plan a halt in the bombing for some time before the end of the year. This halt seems advisable, if not mandatory, entirely apart from its actual effect in bringing about negotiations and a settlement of the Vietnamese conflict. The argument of many who oppose the American effort in Vietnam comes down to the proposition that American air attacks on North Vietnam are what keep the war going and prevent political settlement. A cessation would thus clear the atmosphere and should minimize further loss of domestic and international support for our efforts. Moreover, I believe there is a strong possibility that a bombing halt would lead to suspension of overt enemy operations across the DMZ. And a bombing halt is likely to lead to talks with Hanoi. It is possible that such talks would lead to productive negotiations on at least some issues. No other course affords any hope of these results in the next 15 months.

3. Review intensively the conduct of military operations in the South and consider programs which involve (a) reduced US casualties, (b) procedures for the progressive turn-over to the GVN of greater responsibility for security in the South, and (c) lesser destruction of the people and wealth of South Vietnam.

Robert S. McNamara

376. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, November 2, 1967, 8:15 a.m.

Mr. President:

This memorandum incorporates a brief summary of the discussion last night² plus some suggestions for how the meeting this morning might be handled.

I. *Report on the meeting.*

1. The meeting began with two briefings: one by Gen. Wheeler and the other by George Carver. I would urge you to check with Clark Clifford and others, but I found the briefings impressive, especially Carver who hit just the right balance between the progress we have made and the problems we still confront. He handled the population control data in a lucid but credible way. There was hardly a word spoken that could not be given directly to the press. You may wish to consider a full leadership meeting of this kind, introduced by yourself, after which you could put the whole thing on television, perhaps when Bunker is here.

2. They both concluded that there was very great progress since 1965. We can't count on sufficient progress in the next 15 months to collapse the enemy; but Carver made two good points with respect to the future:

—In part, the future is in our hands and the South Vietnamese's. In particular, the appointment of good officials and effective attack on corruption and a sharp improvement of the ARVN in pacification operations could produce dramatic change.

—From the point of view of Hanoi, they would make a strategic decision to end the war when they had decided the U.S. would not behave like the French did in 1954 and when a viable state structure seemed on the way to emerging in Saigon.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Meeting Notes File, November 1, 1967–Meeting with Foreign Policy Advisors. Secret.

² The President did not attend this November 1 meeting. This reconvened version of the Wise Men group consisted of the most senior foreign policy officials of the current and past administrations. The group, which had last met in 1965, at that time included Acheson, Lodge, Vance, Taylor, Fortas, Clifford, McGeorge Bundy, John McCloy, Arthur Dean, Douglas Dillon, Omar Bradley, Matthew Ridgway, Robert Murphy, and George Ball. In a memorandum to the President, October 20, Rostow discussed recommendations agreed upon by himself and Clifford for inclusion in the group and the briefings it would receive prior to exploring the possibility of a pause. (Ibid., National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 6 E, Bombing Pause Decision by U.S.)

3. Sec. Rusk then, over drinks, reviewed the attitude of Hanoi towards negotiations, emphasizing that their eyes were increasingly fastened on American politics.

4. The general discussion then came to focus around two issues:

—The problem of sustained support for our policy within the U.S.; and the bombing question.

Arthur Dean and General Bradley spent a good deal of their time on the domestic situation and how to present the story of the war in ways which would encourage our people to unify and stay the course. Dean cited the kinds of questions he got in talking to college audiences. Dean Acheson put forward the view that the bulk of the university student opposition stemmed from an understandable desire not to have to go to fight in Vietnam. He was challenged by Mac Bundy and others that this was part but not all the story.

5. On bombing the line up was about as follows:

—All agreed with McNamara, who read from a CIA document, that bombing did not prevent the present level of infiltration of men and arms.³

—George Ball and Dean Acheson urged that we use bombing as a negotiating chip against pressure across the DMZ. Acheson said that we should stop bombing when they did not press across the DMZ and resume bombing when they did until they got the point. Sec. Rusk pointed out we had tried to establish that connection but had failed; but they rather ignored what he was saying. Bob Murphy and General Bradley, in particular, said that out of their experience over the years they were sure that the bombing was having some effect on operations in the South, although it could not be precisely measured. In this discussion it emerged that while Helms agreed with Sec. McNamara that the present level of bombing would not have a demonstrable effect on flows to the South, he disagreed with the judgment that a stoppage of bombing would not result in increased flows to the South. It might.

6. Arthur Dean made strongly the point, out of his experience, that an excessive eagerness to negotiate or a broad humanitarian gesture to the Communists is interpreted as a sign of weakness by Communists.

7. At the close Sec. Rusk urged them all to put their minds to this question: In the face of the situation, as it was outlined to them, what would they do if they were President?

8. Douglas Dillon's questions mainly centered on possibilities for escalation against the North; that is, mining the harbors, hitting the dikes, etc.

³ See footnote 1, Document 351.

9. Incidentally, I detected in this group no sentiment for our pulling out of Vietnam.

II. This is one possible way to handle the meeting this morning at 10:30 a.m.⁴

1. Thank them for giving their time; and suggesting the importance of maintaining the existence and substance of the meeting in confidence. You would like to call on them again. But they constitute so weighty a group that public knowledge of their meetings might be misinterpreted and lead to speculation of crises.

2. A President faced with the present situation constantly must ask himself two questions:

—Is our course in Vietnam right? If it is right, how can we increase public understanding and support for that policy? As they are aware, Hanoi's view of U.S. public understanding and support is a major front in the war—perhaps now the most important front.

3. *The first question is:* Is there anything that we are not doing in the South that we ought to do?

(You might go around the table on this issue.)

The second question: With respect to the North, should we: continue what we are doing? Mine the ports and plan to take down the dikes when the water is high? Unilaterally reduce or eliminate bombing of North Vietnam?

(Again around the table.)

The third question: Negotiations. Should we adopt a passive policy of willingness to negotiate but wait for their initiatives?

If we should try additional initiatives, what should they be?

Despite their refusal of the San Antonio formula, should we unilaterally cease bombing and just see what happens?

The fourth question: Taking into account all that they know, do they believe that we should in one way or another get out of Vietnam?

The fifth question: What measures would they suggest to rally and unite our own people behind the effort in Vietnam?

I suggest that Tom Johnson be present and keep a tally sheet on each man with respect to each question.

Walt

⁴ Rostow's notation on the memorandum indicates that the agenda was "checked by phone with Clark Clifford."

377. Memorandum From the President's Assistant (Jones) to President Johnson¹

Washington, November 2, 1967.

SUBJECT

Meeting with Foreign Policy Advisors, Thursday, November 2, 1967

Meeting convened—10:42 a.m.

Meeting adjourned following luncheon at 2:15 p.m.

Attending were: Clark Clifford, George Ball, McGeorge Bundy, Maxwell Taylor, General Omar Bradley, Robert Murphy, Henry Cabot Lodge, Secretary Dean Rusk, Secretary Nick Katzenbach, Governor Averell Harriman, Assistant Secretary William Bundy, Secretary Robert McNamara, CIA Director Richard Helms, Dean Acheson, Justice Abe Fortas, Arthur Dean, Douglas Dillon, Walt Rostow, George Christian and Jim Jones.

The President greeted the group around the Cabinet table and pointed out that he did not know the details of what had been accomplished in their discussions to this point. He said he did want to raise some questions that concerned him. "I have a peculiar confidence in you as patriots and that is why I have picked you," the President said. He said he wanted to know if our course in Vietnam was right. If not, how should it be modified? He said he is deeply concerned about the deterioration of public support and the lack of editorial support for our policies. He pointed out that if a bomb accidentally kills two civilians in North Vietnam, it makes banner headlines. However, they can log mortar shells into the Palace grounds in Saigon and there are no editorial complaints against it.

The President said he watched General Norstad on television Thursday morning. He found it interesting. "I agreed with almost all he said up to the point of bombing." The President said that Norstad did not say yes or no on the bombing issue. He (Norstad) did point out that the Administration has not unified the nation because we have never told the country that we are really willing to negotiate. The President said Norstad commented that he did not believe the credibility argument, but merely ended up saying the government has failed to communicate with the nation about our willingness to negotiate.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Meeting Notes File, November 2, 1967—Meeting with Foreign Policy Advisors. Top Secret. In another memorandum to the President, undated, Jones summarized the consensus opinions of those at the meeting on the five questions the President asked relating to policy in South Vietnam, the bombing of the North, negotiations, withdrawal, and public relations. (Ibid.)

The President said he thought that “when we sent men to nearly every capital that this would dramatize our willingness, but apparently the people have forgotten this.² So the question is how do we unite the country?”

The President said: “I would like to consider the following five questions and get your advice: 1.) What could we do that we are not doing in South Vietnam? 2.) Concerning the North, should we continue what we are doing, or should we mine the ports and take out the dikes, or should we eliminate the bombing of the North? 3.) On negotiations—should we adopt a passive policy of willingness to negotiate, or should we be more aggressive, or should we bow out? 4.) Should we get out of Vietnam? (At this point the President noted a poll from a Congressional district in Iowa which had 11,000 responses. The poll showed that 34% favored our pulling out; 20% approved the present policies and 40% thought we should do more. The President also said some other polls have been taken in some of the larger states. These show that about 30% favor either a pull in or pull out of Vietnam. Those who want to do more comprise about 35–40% and those who approve of what we are doing now are about 30%. “So it’s about 70–30,” the President said, “but that 30 has grown from 15%.”) 5.) What positive steps should the Administration take to unite the people and to communicate with the nation better?”

The President then called on Secretary Rusk.

Secretary Rusk reported that the group started their meetings yesterday with briefings by George Carver of the CIA and General Wheeler. Rusk then read from a letter marked personal and confidential from U. S. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker which reflected on his first six months in Saigon.³ In general, the letter noted that there has been improvement in the past six months. The military has established a base which has allowed us to go on the offensive. The training of the Vietnamese units has improved considerably. The civil side of the war is proceeding well with the constitutional process and the pacification success equalling in importance the military improvements. The village and the hamlet programs are going well and the Chieu Hoi program is expanding. Bunker’s letter points out that last year the revolutionary development program really got underway. The newly elected government, especially Thieu and Ky, know that they must show progress in order to gain support of the people. Steady progress is being made. Much still needs to be done, however, such as a vigorous processing of the war, elimination of corruption, improvement of

² Reference is to the 37-day pause and concurrent peace initiative of December 1965–January 1966; see *Foreign Relations*, 1964–1968, vol. III, Documents 242 and 254.

³ Not further identified.

the standard of living, especially in the rural areas. Bunker wrote that in the past we have been overly optimistic and have become prisoners of this optimism. However, he is enthusiastic about the progress being made.

Rusk then reported that the group talked about the bombing program, although no consensus was reached, nor was a consensus requested. Rusk said the views ranged widely. Rusk said it was a good evening. Rusk declined to speak for the group because there was no consensus.

The President said "I have met with the Leadership of the Republican Party in Congress and all the Democratic Members of Congress. I have met with the Democratic Senators twice. I point this out to say that we have received no alternatives from Congress on the course we are taking. One of the things that divides us is that a great number of the hawks want us to do more, but the other side is more vociferous." The President then called on Former Secretary of State Dean Acheson.

Acheson addressed himself to each of the five questions posed by the President. "In the South, I was very impressed by George Carver's restatement of what we are doing there. This is the heart of the matter. I agree that this should be pressed just as fast as possible, and as fast as South Vietnam will permit. I am encouraged by the ground fighting in the South and that we are taking the initiative. I got the impression this is a matter we can and will win. So on the first question, I think this is going well," Acheson said.

On the second question concerning the North, Acheson said his view is different from some of the others. He agrees with the view of the Secretary of Defense and would not stop the bombing. Acheson regards this however, as purely a marginal operation as far as the fighting in the South is concerned. He said the bombing in the North is not the essential point.

On negotiations, Acheson said "we must understand that we are not going to have negotiations. The bombing has no effect on negotiations. When these fellows decide they can't defeat the South, then they will give up. This is the way it was in Korea. This is the way the Communists operate," Acheson said.

"The importance of the bombing in the North is not that it is important militarily," Acheson said. "It could be used as a signal, however, not that it is a solution to the stopping of the fighting across the demilitarized zone."

Acheson said it is possible that they will not reduce the fighting until the 1968 election is resolved. "Until that is resolved they may say let's see it out," Acheson added. "I would not talk about negotiations any more. You have made it clear where you stand. This isn't the Communist method. If they can't win they just quit after a while." Ache-

son suggested that we put the bombing in a position where it could be stopped and/or started. In other words play it down. The targets must become less dramatic.

The President replied that we don't play it either up or down. However, it is front page news. The President pointed out that the dramatic impact of the bombing traces to Secretary McNamara's testimony before Senator Stuart Symington's Committee. That generated both the hawks and the doves talking about bombing.

The President said "I am like the steering wheel of a car without any control. The Senate won't let us play down the bombing issue."

Acheson replied "The cross you have to bear is a lousy Senate Foreign Relations Committee. You have a dilettante fool at the head of the Committee."

About reaching the people, Acheson said, "if you agree to the policy I have outlined, then get everyone in the government to agree on it and talk along these policy lines."

Acheson added "we certainly should not get out of Vietnam." He noted that General Bradley remembers after General MacArthur took his licking at the Yalu in the Korean War there was a great outcry to get out.⁴ On December 4, however, Acheson had Dean Rusk and George Kennan into his office and told them to see Secretary George Marshall. "We want less Goddamn analysis and more fighting spirit." Acheson said that the President had a good commander who takes orders in General Westmoreland. Acheson said that he spoke to about 21 Supreme Court law clerks and they were all amazed that I thought we should not get out of Vietnam. Acheson suggested a program be adopted similar to the Citizens Committee on the Marshall Plan⁵ and he said perhaps the Paul Douglas group would be the proper vehicle. He noted that the Citizens Committee on the Marshall Plan organized a group in every city over 150,000 population; got the money mostly from private groups and got up several readable pamphlets that were used as speech material. Acheson said that the President, the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense have taken the whole burden of the Vietnam issue. The people know what these three stand for. What is needed now is several thousand new speakers to support our policy in every city in the nation. Acheson pointed out the main thing is that the President should not worry about this. He said he was pleased

⁴ General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers and Commander of the United Nations forces in Korea, was attacked on November 26, 1950, by 200,000 Chinese "volunteers" who crossed the Yalu River, the border between Korea and China.

⁵ The U.S. Government's post-World War II economic recovery program for Western Europe.

to read in Scotty Reston's column that the President gave up whiskey and took up golf.

The President interjected that "he was wrong on both counts. When Mac Bundy walked out of Washington, so did Scotty Reston and he doesn't know what is going on."

In summary on the bombing, Acheson believes we should play down its importance. When the communists ease the pressure off the DMZ, we can reduce the bombing in the North. However, we should not give advance notice of these bombing pauses.

McGeorge Bundy said he agreed with nearly everything that Acheson said. He said the bombing in the North is out of proportion to its importance. Bundy said to go after the dikes or Haiphong would not be a net gain and would unnecessarily worry the moderate to dovish population.

Bundy said that the South is the focus. He thinks that it is right that the President continues to have the Medal of Honor winners presented in the Rose Garden. He thinks a great deal has been done in the provinces and these people should be honored and publicized. Bundy said "we have done a remarkable job in the last two years in getting the work in the provinces organized. We have a wonderful first team in there. Vietnam will have to do more. Anything that shows that Vietnam is doing more will be helpful over here."

Bundy said he shares Acheson's opinion that there will not be negotiations. "I suppose we cannot say that publicly because the judges of public opinion in the nation won't believe it. But I think it is logical to say that we in the Administration do not expect negotiations in the next year," Bundy said.

Bundy said, "getting out of Vietnam is as impossible and [as?] it is undesirable." He pointed out that there is an enormous difference in Asia as it is now and what it might have been because of what the President did in 1965. He said this point should be emphasized.

As to how to pull the nation together—Bundy said the communication people who are centered in New York cannot be won over, but they should not be allowed to set the tone of the debate. "Your (the President) sense of where you are going is very important here."

"One must also ask," Bundy added, "that what is eroding public support are the battles and deaths and dangers to the sons of mothers and fathers with no picture of a result in sight. If we can permeate to the public that we are seeing the results and the end of the road, this will be helpful.

Former Secretary of the Treasury Douglas Dillon said he "agrees with a great deal of what has been said. There is nothing additional in the South that we can do that is not being done now." He pointed out however that the South Vietnamese must be expected to do more.

"In the North, it is just about right and we should continue as we are doing. I would not think of going further and bombing the dikes and harbors. This is different than the way I thought two years ago," Dillon said.

On negotiations Dillon agreed entirely with Acheson. The trade suggested by Acheson is excellent.

Dillon said we must not get out of Vietnam.

On how to better communicate—Dillon said "our major emphasis should be shifted to the position that we are in rather than why or how we got there. We should clarify what we are doing. There is a lot of misunderstanding about what we are doing. The subject that McGeorge Bundy discussed is most important. That is the feeling on both sides, including both the doves and hawks, that the situation over there is hopeless. We must show some progress. To talk of 15 years seems like forever. I was surprised that last night, things were better than I had expected," Dillon said.

"The revolutionary development program should be emphasized. Perhaps Bunker could come back and make a report to the nation. But we must give some hope that there is a possibility in the next two or three years of seeing light at the end of the tunnel. If the people thought that this could end at some time, we would gain a lot more support," Dillon said.

Dillon suggested one group to talk to are the top educators, and the heads of colleges and the deans. He noted that much of the trouble is coming largely from the younger professors and students. Those college presidents whom Dillon knows, sympathize with the students' dovish views. Dillon believes that a good briefing to these top educators who are responsible people would be very helpful.

Arthur Dean said the country as a whole is confused. "Very few people have read the Geneva Accords of 1954.⁶ It calls for a single election in the North and the South. Then we have said that we will not let the people of South Vietnam down and not let them be incorporated into the North. This is inconsistent with our profession of belief in the Geneva Accords of '54."

Dean said there is also a feeling that Ambassador Arthur Goldberg is willing to negotiate on less honourous terms than Washington. If South Vietnam is as important, then why are we willing to say that we will abide by the majority vote. This means all our sacrifice will have been in vain.

⁶ For this agreement ending the Franco-Viet Minh war, reached on July 21, 1954, see *Foreign Relations*, 1952–1954, vol. XIII, Part 2, pp. 1859–1861.

Dean said there is a strong feeling among the hawks especially that the President and Secretary McNamara are vetoing the recommendations of the Joint Chiefs. Dean suggested that someone pull together everything there is on why we are in Vietnam. If the majority of the people are satisfied based on the national interest, they would support us. Dean said the people are puzzled. They are puzzled about the value of the bombing. He said he agrees generally with Secretary Acheson. Rusk worried that if we get them to the conference table, they will do the same thing they did in the Korean War by demanding that we get out before any other points of negotiation are taken up.

Henry Cabot Lodge said he had three suggestions for the South: "1.) There should be an independent audit of how the revamping of the ARVN is going; of those training the ARVN; and how the local police technique is improving. Do the trainees understand the significance of the ARVN thing itself? 2.) Public opinion is more concerned with U.S. casualties than with our bombing program. If the casualties go down, nothing else matters so much. An exclusive military victory is not conceivable to me."

Lodge suggested a "split up and keep off balance" military policy rather than a "seek out and destroy" policy. "I would take a look at this policy because it utilizes the smaller units and means less casualties. This also diminishes the number of refugees." 3.) Lodge pointed out that when he went to Saigon in 1965 he talked about a true revolution to win over the people. "In Vietnam, this means non-government activity. However, the government must give the green light, and the U.S. must help, but it must be way in the background." Lodge recommended the use of the Tenant Farmers Union etc., to develop farm credit, rice milling, and marketing programs. He pointed out that six months ago, fertilizers were piped in through the Tenant Farmers Union, and now the Union has tripled. "But you must stimulate and agitate them. This will be visual proof of a true revolution to win over the people. This may take the French and Chinese to the wall, but it will point out a true revolution to the Vietnamese. As this program succeeds, you can cut down on U.S. involvement, and thereby cut down on U.S. casualties." Lodge said it is better to work through the unions, and organizations such as this as opposed to the local governments because you do not have competent local governments as such in Vietnam yet.

Lodge agreed with Acheson about the bombing, and about negotiations. Lodge also added it would be unthinkable about getting out of Vietnam. "In this war we are trying to divert a change in the balance of power."

Lodge said he is working with the Citizens Committee. "They are planning a series of brochures to discuss why we are in Vietnam, what

we have accomplished, what needs to be done, a history of the people and the trouble there."

Lodge suggested that Bunker should be given lots of publicity when he gets back to report.

At this point, the President invited all of the group to lunch. Everyone accepted except Douglas Dillon who had a previous commitment and would have to leave.

Robert Murphy said it is best to focus on what might be done. We don't know whether there will be negotiations or not. Murphy pointed out that he works with Norstad and Norstad has had strange illusions on negotiations. Murphy suggested that the bombing be left in the hands of the Joint Chiefs as much as possible. He said it is effective. Murphy noted that there is no hate complex like there was against Hitler. He said that Ho Chi Minh is not regarded as evil in many places in the United States and in Europe he is regarded as a kindly hero. There should also be a better fixation on the small group of men who are responsible in the North. This should be a priority of the 303 Committee. The President should not personally be involved. He said he has been told that this is not possible, but an intensive study should be given to the elimination of the group of men responsible in the North.

Governor Averell Harriman said he wished Dean Acheson would say publicly what he said about the character of the Foreign Relations Committee Chairman. Harriman added that he "had tremendous respect for Senator Gale McGee and they threw him off the committee." Harriman said the difference between Senator Vandenberg⁷ and his Committee and the present committee is as great as black and white.

The President pointed out that even then, Vandenberg and the Foreign Relations Committee made it miserable for the Secretary of State.

General Omar Bradley said in general he agrees with the comments that have been made. "The military services, both ours and the Vietnamese are improving, and we are making progress. It is difficult for the American people to understand why we cannot draw a line and push this line up and back. There is confusion among the people because they cannot view Vietnam in the same way they did in World War II. The enemy may be 10 or 15 feet away from you and you cannot see him. The improvement in the local forces are beginning to be played up in the last few days. Some of the units are very good. They are training them well, Bradley said.

⁷ Senator Arthur Vandenberg (R-MI), Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 1947–1949.

“On the bombing, we should stick to military targets. They do affect the North Vietnamese ability to fight in the South. We must keep up the bombing.” Bradley said military targets are sometimes questionable. “Whether the dikes will become military targets, I do not know.”

“On negotiations there should not be so much talk. The more we talk about negotiations, this is a sign of weakness to them. If we stop the bombing, we don’t need to tell them in advance,” Bradley said.

The President noted that when we had told them in advance about our bombing pauses, it has not worked in the past.

Concerning the troubles at home, Bradley said our means of communications are largely responsible. “For example, the *Washington Post* used three pages to describe the 35,000 or so peace marchers who converged on the Pentagon recently. However, there were 180,000 in New York and New Jersey who demonstrated in support of our men in Vietnam, and this was played on page 17 of the *Post*.”

Bradley said “we’ve got to arouse patriotism somehow. We’ve never had a war without patriotic slogans. Perhaps the slogan in this would be “Patience,” 100 years means nothing to a Chinaman, but we do not have their same patience. The Korean troops in Vietnam have more patience. They’ll sit in front of a tunnel until the North Vietnamese come out.” Bradley said he believes if it wasn’t for all the protesters, the North Vietnamese would give up. He said that captured prisoners have told him they (North Vietnam) would win the war, not in Vietnam but back in the States, as they did with the French. We are winning, but we must have patience,” Bradley concluded.

The President asked General Bradley to tell the group about the competence of the South Vietnamese, the Korean, and the United States men in Vietnam.

Bradley said “I have never seen better morale or better fed troops. They get ice cream about three times a week. Only two out of the thousand that I and my wife visited disliked being there or did not understand why they were there. These were two colored soldiers from Detroit who were more interested in the riots in Detroit than in Vietnam. As for the Vietnamese, all are enthusiastic, they still have some leaders that should not be there, but they are trying to get them out. I was impressed with the popular forces in the villages. We must do something to get the hearts of the Vietnamese people. They want to be let alone and grow their rice more than anything else. They probably feel a little more secure with the government of South Vietnam than the Viet Cong. Two captured Viet Cong were about 12 or 13 years old and they said they had to go fight for the Viet Cong or their families would be killed,” Bradley said.

General Maxwell Taylor said that in the South, things are going well. He made two points. 1.) He questions the close defense of the frontier on the DMZ and in the highland area, and 2.) He believes that we have never decided on what we are going to offer the Viet Cong and this is a problem.

Taylor said the bombing is an essential part of our strategy, and to give it up without clearly getting something in return would be wrong.

The President asked him if he was talking about *quid pro quo* or the Acheson program.

Taylor said he prefers the first but would go along with the latter.

On negotiations, Taylor agrees that a subsiding solution is more likely than negotiations. He pointed out that if he were Ho Chi Minh, he would stay with what the North Vietnamese are doing, at least through the elections in 1968.

On the homefront, Taylor said that he has made more speeches than anyone, having completed his 126th last night. "The people still are asking why they are not being told all the facts on Vietnam. We should organize a nationwide campaign that will be continuous. Television is our best weapon as it is with the opposition. Every week we should have a program either sponsored by public or private in which the people can ask their government questions. We can also bring personalities—returning veterans, diplomats, etc., to discuss Vietnam."

George Ball said that no one in the group thinks we should get out of Vietnam, and no one gives propriety to the Gavin or Galbraith enclave theory.⁸

"In the South, the report we received was very reassuring. The war of attrition and civil action is in competent hands and we are doing very well there. We should focus on the conditions that will lead the other side to stopping the fighting. We must look and see how the war looks to them. There are two wars in the eyes of Hanoi. First the war in the South. This one they can afford to lose or to withdraw from. Second is the war in the North which is viewed as a war by the greatest imperialist force against a sister socialist state. Can they afford to lose that one, we must ask," Ball said.

"In light of that then, is the bombing useful in the North. Bombing in the North won't limit the flow of supplies into the South significantly. On the other hand, it will make it almost impossible for them to stop the war." Ball recommended a change of tactics, that is, shift-

⁸ James Gavin, a former General and Ambassador, advocated the enclave theory of withdrawing to fortified areas, most notably during hearings before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in February 1966. Former Ambassador John K. Galbraith's similar plan was made public in late June 1967.

ing of the bombing away from the harbor and dikes to the bombing of the DMZ as an interdiction of men and supplies. "This would clearly show the other side that we are creating the conditions to let them stop the fighting," Ball said.

As far as persuading the U.S. to support our efforts there, Ball pointed out that a double standard is implicit in our presence in Vietnam. He said there is a great disparity in size and strength between the United States and the Viet Cong and North Vietnam. He also pointed out that many students can't understand why we are using our air power against a primitive people that has no air power.

Ball said very few Americans really see a political solution as another Munich. We don't talk about getting out. He said he has had a bad reaction to Goldberg's statement that six months after the war, we'll get out. People don't really believe this, because they look at Korea and see we've been there for 17 years. Furthermore, if they do believe we are telling the truth, they think we should have our heads examined because we would be throwing away everything we fought for. Ball said we should consider all these in terms of the American national interest. We are in a position now instead of arguing how we got there as to what we do about it now that we're there.

Following Ball's statement the group adjourned to wash up before lunch.⁹

Lunch convened at 1:03 p.m.

The President called on Justice Fortas.

Fortas said there was a remarkable presentation by George Carver of the CIA last night. Fortas said the country should hear the presentation made by Carver. He said the nation is totally unaware of this side of the Vietnam conflict. He said Carver told the story with complete conviction and great sophistication. Fortas suggested that the press might be told that Carver briefed the Cabinet and he would be available to brief the press in a low-key way. Following this, Fortas recommended a repeat performance by Carver for Members of Congress and later for other opinion makers. He said these briefings would be contrary to the opinion of the country that there are no improvements. Fortas then suggested that later on Ambassador Bunker return and report.

Fortas expressed his gratitude to the Paul Douglas Committee participants.¹⁰ He said at last some of the leaders and people of the country are beginning to speak out. "I believe there is a good deal of over-

⁹ The group went to the President's quarters at 12:45 p.m. (Johnson Library, President's Daily Diary)

¹⁰ Former Senator Paul H. Douglas (D-IL) was co-chairman of the Citizens Committee for Peace with Freedom in Vietnam, a group that strongly supported the administration's Vietnam policy.

reaction to what appears to be the public attitude of the United States. This opposition exists in only a small group of the community, primarily the intellectuals or so-called intellectuals and the press. The opposition is not as widespread as we think. Public opinion is a fickle thing and a changeable thing. The American people are committed to a few propositions that are contrary to the rash of opposition. The public would be outraged if we withdrew. We are not now prepared for a 'Fortress America,' nor are we for the foreseeable future. It is very important to separate the superficialities of expression from the fundamentals of American belief."

Negotiations are symbolic rather than a real thing, Fortas said. This could be an ingenious trap to trap us into negotiations on terms or at a time when they can be corrosive to us. "We've been fortunate so far that North Vietnam has rejected our offer. When the time comes what will happen will be a cessation of hostilities, not negotiations. The American people are not interested in negotiations. That is merely a symbol. That is why the people don't understand you when you say you're willing to negotiate, because the American people really don't believe in negotiations. It would serve no purpose to continue to emphasize our willingness to negotiate. You have already stated your position. Don't repudiate what you have done but tone down on it in the future. To continue to talk about negotiations only signals to the Communists that they are succeeding in winning over American public opinion," Fortas said.

On the bombing, Fortas said in reference to George Ball's comments, that he admires the ingenuity in the proposal but rejects the logic for stopping the bombing in the North: "I don't believe North Vietnam thinks we are out to overthrow their government, and I don't believe it would have any effect if we shifted our bombing. The bombing of the North is not the way to end the war but a way to make cessation of the hostilities on a basis acceptable to us a possibility."

The President asked Dick Helms what the minimum and maximum figures of people who are being tied up in the North to repair the damage done by U.S. bombing.

Helms replied about 500,000.

Fortas continued saying he was interested in Lodge's proposal. "I wonder if all questions have been asked about the nature of our military action in the South. I think we should explore a greater use of the small military units in the South."

The President said he has asked the Secretary how we could speed up winning the war. "The Joint Chiefs came up with 10 proposals, all of which involve the North. I sent it back to them to focus on the South and they reported that we can't do anything more than we are doing in the South now," the President said.

Dean Acheson commented on Fortas' idea of having Carver brief the press, saying "neither George (Christian) nor the CIA should brief the press."

Fortas said he was very impressed both by what he (Carver) said and how he said it. He realizes, of course, that anything anyone in Government says will be denounced by the Fulbrights.

The President asked the group to give any suggestion on Vietnam or any danger signals they see in any other part of the world. He said he did not want this group to confine itself totally to Vietnam. He asked them to want to and to feel obligated to tell him personally for his eyes only about any of these subjects, even his own competence or that of the Secretary of State or Defense in handling matters of world affairs. He then introduced Clark Clifford as one of his most valued advisors who is most generous with his time.

Clifford said that the President was aware of his stand on the questions posed, and thus he would confine his comments to one subject—the attitude of American people. "An effort must be made to explain and to educate the American people. There is another area which we have not discussed today—namely that American people will react to hearing from those individuals who live in Southeast Asia who can give a better color of the conditions there. For example, President Thieu should visit the United States if the protocol can be worked out. He could address a Joint Session of the Congress, he could be invited to the Press Club and I am certain he could get prime time on television some evening where he could explain the nature of the problem there. He is an intelligent and a reasonable fellow, and more balanced than Ky. He could go through the background of the conflict, the importance of the conflict, and I think this would be very helpful. Colonel Robin Olds, who is our only air ace, could be assigned to speak to large audiences. Selected officials from other Southeast Asian nations and Ambassadors from Southeast Asian nations could visit the United States to make appearances," Clifford suggested.

"The thing to keep in mind however is that no matter what this accomplishes, this will not be a popular war. No wars have been popular. In the Revolutionary War there was an enormous body who felt this was a tragic mistake. The same was true in the Civil War where President Lincoln was beleaguered day after day with people who thought he should get out. The First World War was enormously unpopular with many of the American people. In the Korean War, it was popular in 1950, and in 1951 more than 60% thought we were wrong," Clifford said.

The President interjected at this time to point out that the Korean War at the time of our entering was favored 83–7% and 6 months later the balance had shifted to 66–24 against.

Clifford continued saying that he remembers well Senator Taft calling the Korean Conflict "Truman's War". One possible exception is World War II. "But wars will be unpopular and we won't be able to sell it to everyone. But we must go on because what we are doing is right. But recognizing this fact, I hope we won't get frustrated."

"Last night was an enormously interesting experience. Secretary McNamara said that perhaps he and Rusk's efforts since 1961 have been a failure. But this is not true. Their efforts have constituted an enormous success. One of the measures of the success that history will look very favorably upon is that both Presidents Kennedy and Johnson didn't wait for public opinion to catch up with them. They went ahead with what was right, and because of that the war is a success today. You can look around and find that the other nations say we have provided them with a shield. They cannot depend upon the British or the French. This has been an enormous success but we won't be able to convince the American people of that as long as it is going on. So we should go right on doing what we're going to do. It is important that we do so," Clifford continued.

"Any cessation in the South or the North will be interpreted as a sign of weakness of the American people. If we keep up the pressure on them, gradually the will of the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese will wear down," Clifford concluded.

At 1:45 p.m. Lynda Bird brought Patrick Lyndon Nugent¹¹ in to the President. Lyn stayed in the President's arms for most of the remainder of the luncheon.

The President then briefly summarized the consensus of opinions given today. Generally everyone agrees with our present course in the South. The Lodge proposal is generally agreed upon. In the North, there is the general agreement that we should not extend the bombing any further. There is some sentiment for moderating the bombing. We have moved far along on the bombing. We've hit all but 24 out of the 9,000 targets or the 5,000 military targets. The President then called on McGeorge Bundy to summarize the feelings of the group and asked Bundy to put on paper his summary.

Bundy suggested two things. First, he said no one has said anything about China because no one really believes that the President will do anything that will start trouble with China. Most people understand that. Although there are many in Bundy's circle of moderate to dovish people who do not understand that and he will go about to make this clear. Also, there is a sense of clarity and calmness among the group with a heavy majority agreed about what we should or should not do. Bundy pointed out that this unity of agreement is not reported in the

¹¹ The President's grandson.

Press and is a popular misconception. He said an endless many hours have been spent pointing out how we got to where we are now. Instead, the emphasis should be what do we do now. He said there is agreement that the bombing is important but is overemphasized. He pointed out that the group has not given detailed attention to a pause or refusal of a pause, but there is some agreement that it is not a critical point.

The President asked that all of the group try to give their views to the public, and he asked that when they make speeches that they provide him a copy of what they said so he will know.

Walt Rostow addressed himself to Hanoi's mind which must concern itself with the rate of erosion of their manpower base against the erosion of the American political base. He pointed out that at least half of the job must be done by the South Vietnamese government. They must show improved administration. They must make a bold, bloody attack on corruption and the ARVN must be more aggressive in pacification.

Rostow agrees that this will not be a popular war but he points out that the progress taking place will help win support. He said that there are ways of guiding the press to show light at the end of the tunnel.

On negotiations, Rostow said the normal way for the Communists is to pack up and cease aggression rather than negotiate. He pointed out however that Vietnam may be different in that Hanoi will not want the NLF destroyed as it was in Indonesia and they may want to negotiate on this point. Secondly, Hanoi may want to negotiate about bases in South Vietnam. So negotiations are not out of the realm of possibility.

The President called on Under Secretary Nicholas Katzenbach who chided that if President Thieu and Ambassador Bunker are brought back to the United States, "that leaves Vietnam under Locke and Ky!"

Secretary McNamara expressed his personal appreciation to the group.

The President said that no nation has been more enlightenly served than under Secretaries Rusk and McNamara. He pointed out that these two are the highest type of manhood that this nation can produce. Their working relationship is good and they have had no petty jealousies or quarrels. "Their only test is what is good for their country," the President said.

Secretary Rusk said that the deliberations in the past two days have been thoughtful, imaginative and responsible. He expressed his personal appreciation. He agreed that this was not a popular war but one of the problems in polling of public opinion on the popularity of the war is the way the questions are phrased. He said that he is sure that if the President were asked by a pollster, "are you happy about Vietnam," the President would reply "hell no."

On negotiations, Rusk said we don't expect Hanoi to come to the negotiating table very soon.

In bombing, he pointed out what it does for the morale of our men. So when we consider a shifting or a stopping of the bombing on a geography basis, we must consider the morale of the men.

The President said that we are studying what essential targets remain. There will have to be some restrikes and we are studying when and where. The President then called on Secretary McNamara to discuss the so-called barrier.

McNamara said first of all it is not a barrier. For five or six years we have been studying how to interdict men and materials. We've considered many things from the use of divisions to an actual Maginot Line, but none merited being put into play. About a year and a half ago, we got our scientists and engineers to analyze the situation, and they improved the effectiveness of our air campaign in Laos, including laying seismic sensors on the ground and acoustical sensors in the trees to detect equipment and men. The principle is that once these sensors detect movement they transmit to a base in Thailand and from there planes are dispatched. We start the operation against vehicles on December 1 and against men on January 1. We don't know how effective it's going to be, but we are hopeful. There are also obstacle defenses in which we have a cleared area with mines and other obstacles and fixed fire positions in the north of South Vietnam.

McNamara revealed that captured documents showed about 20% of those who leave the North do not reach the South. About 2% of these are because of air casualties. Our scientists and engineers hope this new system will increase the air casualties by 15 fold, in other words, up to 30%. They think the destruction of the trucks by air casualties will increase 200–300%. McNamara points out that we haven't discussed this program because it is so complex that with some ingenuity by the enemy it can be detected and destroyed. Therefore, I have put a flat barrier that there will be no discussions. McNamara said he does not want to overstate its effectiveness, but if it improves the casualty ratio by even a few percent it will have been worth the effort.

Secretary Rusk addressed himself briefly to the Goldberg–Mansfield Resolution on bringing the Vietnam issue to the United Nations.¹² He pointed out that several efforts in the past to do this have not worked. It is both an illusion and a sophistication. In the Security Council we do not have the nine votes necessary. The Soviet Union does not

¹² See footnote 2, Document 373. On November 2 Goldberg testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on his efforts to obtain UN involvement with the Vietnam issue. For text of his testimony, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1967*, pp. 1015–1021.

want it brought up. They do not want to heat up any issue between them and the United States at this time. Other nations oppose it for different reasons. Denmark doesn't want it brought up because to vote with us would probably mean the downfall of their government. Paul Martin of Canada is against it because he wants to be Prime Minister more than anything else, and his statements are for pure domestic consumption. Hanoi and Peking say that it does not belong in the United Nations. If we don't get the nine votes or if we get an adverse vote, it's going to be interpreted as a repudiation of our policy. In the General Assembly the situation is much the same way. The difference between the public view and the private statements of these world leaders is enormous. For example, there is no more of a hawk than Ne Win of Burma, yet if it were brought before the UN, he would probably vote against it. We have tried to make clear to these Senators that they are not on a realistic path. We have a resolution pending now which no one wants to vote on.

The President pointed out that the United States presence in Southeast Asia has had its effect. It has hampered China's policy and caused reversals against China in Indonesia and other parts of the world. Practically all the leaders in Asia are in deep sympathy with us. Prime Minister Lee of Singapore said he came to the United States to find out if the American people would hold out. He knew that the President, Secretary Rusk and Secretary McNamara would, but he didn't know about the resoluteness of the American people. The President pointed out that General Taylor and Clark Clifford did a marvelous job on their trip to Southeast Asia. As a result, the Thais have brought up their troop strength to 10,000. The Koreans, Australians, New Zealanders are all going to send more troops. The South Vietnamese are increasing their troop strength by 60 or 65,000.

The President adjourned the group at 2:15 p.m.

378. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, November 2, 1967, 4:40 p.m.

Mr. President:

Herewith my comments on Secretary McNamara's draft paper of November 1, 1967.²

1. I would summarize Secretary McNamara's argument as follows: In the next 15 months we shall make progress in South Vietnam but not enough progress either to lead to peace or convince our people that major progress has been made and there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Under these circumstances, he believes two conflicting tendencies will grow in U.S. public opinion: on the one hand, to escalate the war in the North and expand it on the ground in the South; on the other hand, to pull out.

To avoid this believed polarization of U.S. public opinion around the extremes, he believes we should take a series of measures that would stabilize the war and push the North Vietnamese into a negotiation, even on a "fight and talk" basis. At the maximum, he believes this process could lead to a successful negotiation; at the minimum, it would avoid the pressures to expand the war in the air and on the ground, which he greatly fears.

2. My observations on the political, military and diplomatic aspects of this argument follow.

a. *Political*. If his proposed strategy did not lead to a successful negotiation, you would be pushed off the middle ground you now hold at home. To test Bob's strategy would require a long bombing cessation, plus a Panmunjom phase, until we found out whether they were serious about negotiations. If we then had to resume full-scale bombing, the Republicans could accuse us of vacillation and adopt a hard line which might then appeal to our people. If we got caught in a Panmunjom phase, the case for their advocating a stronger policy would be even more clear. In a recent Gallup poll, some 67% of the American people want us to continue bombing the North (as I remember it). Acknowledging my limitations as a judge of domestic politics, I am extremely skeptical of any change in strategy that would take you away

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Walt Rostow, Meeting with President, Vietnam—Conduct of War (Sensitive). Top Secret; Literally Eyes Only. Another copy is *ibid.*, March 19, 1970 Memo to the President.

² Document 375.

from your present middle position; that is, using rationally all the power available, but avoiding actions likely to engage the Soviet Union and Communist China. If we shift unilaterally towards de-escalation, the Republicans will move in and crystallize a majority around a stronger policy.

If I felt Bob's strategy would measurably increase the chances of a true settlement, I believe the risk might be worth taking. But both a unilateral bombing cessation and an announced policy of "stabilization" would, in my view, be judged in Hanoi a mark of weakness rather than evidence of increased U.S. capacity to sweat out the war.

b. *Military.* Although I certainly will not predict for you an early end to the war, I believe that, with a little luck and reasonable performance by the South Vietnamese under the new government, the evidence of solid progress will become increasingly clear to one and all. It is no accident that Republican politicians are beginning to smell this. If progress in fact continues, we will get more and more of the kind of testimony that Alsop, Walter Judd, General Bradley, etc., are now generating. Moreover, as an old intelligence officer, I know that one should take very seriously events that one did not predict. I have been looking for a long time, as you know, for a negotiation within South Vietnam. But I did not expect so soon after the failure in Paris as substantive a message as we got by the Buttercup channel.³ That channel may develop only slowly. It may not yield anything. But the simple fact is this: it emerged while we were bombing the North full scale. Before changing our strategy in the direction suggested by Bob McNamara, I would certainly play this string out to the full. Incidentally, if it works well, I am sure we will come back to the bombing question—if and when the National Liberation Front suggests that we talk to Hanoi about the issues directly at stake between the U.S. and the DRV. (That is foreshadowed in their description of the three negotiations required for peace.) Until proved otherwise, then, I would stay with Buttercup and see where it leads us, while holding steady on our present program.

c. *Diplomacy.* As indicated above, I would play out the Buttercup string before probing or initiating in any other direction. I detect in the full flow of intelligence a shift of the following kind:

—an increase in Soviet influence in Hanoi, partially caused by our bombing and a consequent requirement for very large increases in Soviet aid;

—a shift in Hanoi to the view that they cannot directly take over the South now and, therefore, they have to accept the 17th parallel for a considerable time period;

³ See Document 369.

—within this framework, a probing for what the status of the Communists would be within South Vietnam in a time of peace.

If this is right, we are already in a kind of Panmunjom stage; that is, their military operations are designed not to produce victory but to improve their position in a negotiation which is, in a sense, already under way. It is quite clear from Buttercup that they are trying to bargain the highest possible status for the National Liberation Front in the South against our clear desire to get the war off our necks. If and when we come into contact and begin to exchange views, it may well turn out that their minimum price for National Liberation Front status is higher than we and the government of South Vietnam are prepared to pay. In that case, we shall have to prove that their bargaining power diminishes with the passage of time—not increases. That, in turn, means high costs in the North; maximum pressure in the South on their manpower base. I believe Bob's strategy would ease their problem and permit them rationally to protract the negotiation—unless Bob is correct on domestic politics and I am wrong. That is, if the country settled down for the long pull comfortably with Bob's program, he could be right. If his policy opened up a debate between united Republicans claiming we had gone soft and a Democratic Administration, with the JCS in disagreement if not open revolt, then my view is correct.

3. *Some Specifics.* Having taken this negative stance in general, I would agree at the moment with his points 1–5, and 9 (page 6); but I would not announce them as a new policy—in part, because I don't think we need a new announced policy; in part, because changing circumstances might make it wise to reopen some of the issues in those paragraphs.

Walt

379. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, November 2, 1967, 1230Z.

10206. For the President from Bunker. Herewith my twenty-seventh weekly telegram:

A. General

1. I believe that no one could have been an observer of the events of the last few days without feeling that he had been witnessing the rebirth of a nation. One sensed everywhere a new feeling of confidence, of pride in the fact that the Vietnamese people had had the maturity to carry out five elections in the last fourteen months in the midst of war and had been able to establish institutions of representative democracy, a new determination to play a greater part in their own destiny. This came out in a good many ways—in the dignity, in the simplicity, in the good taste of the inaugural ceremonies, appropriate to war-time conditions, and in the effectiveness and precision with which they were carried out; in the restrained pageantry of the National Day celebration, the parade shorter this year because of the war but splendidly executed, to the obvious pleasure and approval of the crowds who were watching. It is interesting that Chieu Hoi contingent received a good deal of applause from the crowds and suffered no critical or derogatory comments. And President Thieu's fine inaugural address was a call to greatness, for further sacrifices, for greater determination, for a continual search for peace.² In it he referred to the difficulties of the past four years as having been useful in helping to determine the path to follow and opening up a great new era full of promise; in his own words "the greatness and the promise of the glories and the difficulties awaiting us." He stated that his administration would have three guiding principles in carrying out his national program: to build democracy, to restore peace, to reform society.

2. In the pursuit of peace he would propose directly to the North Vietnamese Government that it meet with the Government of South Vietnam to seek a way to end the war, that he would open the door to

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Immediate; Nodis. Rostow transmitted a retyped copy of the telegram to the President. The notation "ps 11–3" on Rostow's covering memorandum transmitting the copy to the President, November 2, indicated that the President saw the telegram on November 3. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 8B(1)[B]) This telegram is printed in full in Pike, *The Bunker Papers*, pp. 224–233.

² Thieu's speech is printed in *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1967*, pp. 1010–1015.

peace and leave the door always open. The Liberation Front would not be an obstacle to peace talks. As in 1954, the Front elements today have the right of choice: "Whoever believes in Marxism is free to go North. Whoever believes, as we do, in freedom and democracy may remain and work with us."

3. At the same time he made clear the "iron determination" of South Vietnam to defend the ideal of freedom and democracy. While paying tribute to the government and people of the United States and other friendly countries who had rendered assistance, he reminded his people "that the present war is still our war and the entire force of the population must be marshaled in support of the overall war effort in order to defend the freedom and sovereignty of the country, that all, civilians and soldiers alike must understand the necessity for sacrifice for the common struggle. A united effort must be made to grasp the initiative and shorten the road to peace. He pointed out that this increased effort and determination was not aimed at destroying their compatriots above the parallel. On the contrary it was designed to check the expansion of Communist aggression, to preserve stability of Southeast Asia, and to build a lasting peace for Asia and the whole world.

4. He asked the people for a stronger war effort because all weapons must be employed to achieve victory, not military weapons alone but political, economic, cultural and social as well. A genuine appropriate democratic regime must be built in order to restore participation in national affairs to the people, and to reform society in order to liberate and advance the people. To this end all the people would have to endure many more sacrifices and make many more efforts. To achieve unity and solidarity many things would have to be done: (A) the army must be constantly improved and strengthened but it must also have the backing of moral support and strong popular organization on the home front; (B) a strong home guard must be organized to defend the towns in order to reduce the burdens on the fighting troops; (C) those living in the capital and other cities will have to strive and sacrifice more to reduce the appalling contrast between cities and the countryside which had long borne the greater part of the war burden; (D) and the government must win the confidence of the people so that they will voluntarily accept the efforts and the sacrifices necessary to the war effort. It must carry forward its task of building democracy and reforming society, of raising people's living standards and education, of accelerating the national rural development policy and industrial development.

5. Among the short term measures the President included a number of urgent preliminary things which he felt should be undertaken immediately: (A) to publicize more widely Vietnam's position and to win world support for its cause; (B) in the social field defense of morals

must be promoted, public order and measures vital to the daily life of the city people guarded and increased; (C) economic stability must be promoted and the price spiral halted; (D) national order and discipline and respect for law must be strengthened; (E) opportunities for students and civil servants to serve the nation and to employ their ability and enthusiasm must be opened up; (F) an austerity movement to eliminate the excessive disparity between the sufferings and hardships of the rural front lines and high living in the urban areas must be launched; (G) finally and most importantly corruption must be stamped out and administrative organization, procedure and personnel improved in order to serve the people better.

6. In concluding the President appealed for the help of all the people in the common task of this beginning of a new era.

[Here follows discussion of other political, military, and economic matters.]

Bunker

380. **Memorandum From the Ambassador at Large (Harriman) to President Johnson and Secretary of State Rusk¹**

Washington, November 3, 1967.

SUBJECT

Negotiations

There were several statements made by members of the Senior Group during the discussions of Wednesday evening and Thursday,² regarding which I should like to comment:

(1) A number of participants expressed the opinion that proposals for negotiation for peace by the United States Government only encourage Hanoi to hold out. There is no evidence whatever supporting this contention. On the other hand, it seems clear that the President's position has been materially strengthened both at home and abroad by the statements and efforts he has made or authorized to bring about talks. I strongly recommend that this policy be continued.

¹ Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Harriman Papers, Special Files, Public Service, Chronological File, November 1967. Secret; Nodis.

² Reference is to the Wise Men's meetings on November 1 and 2; see Documents 376 and 377.

(2) Some participants indicated their belief that there was no chance of the other side's agreeing to talks until after our election and that, therefore, it was useless for us to attempt to bring about talks before then. I agree that serious talks are unlikely until after our election (or at least until after the Republican Convention) but I believe there is a significant chance that should not be overlooked that talks may be possible before then. The clearest evidence of this is "Buttercup" in which the NLF approach appears to be a bona fide attempt to begin talks.³ Furthermore we have indications of differences of opinion within the Hanoi leadership on the issue of negotiations. Prime Minister Maurer of Rumania, who recently visited Hanoi, has told us of this.⁴ I think it important that we not exclude the possibility that talks with either Hanoi or the NLF may be held before our elections and that our actions could increase the likelihood of talks.

(3) Certain participants expressed the belief that there will never be talks but that at some point the enemy forces will merely fade away. I agree with what Walt Rostow stated, namely, that when Hanoi decides to consider abandoning its attack on the South, it will in all likelihood wish negotiations to attempt to reach agreement on certain important issues, either directly or through the NLF, though probably not on the Geneva model. It is also possible that some matters can be settled between the GVN and the NLF.

Therefore, unless otherwise instructed, I plan to continue my activities without regard to these particular comments made at the recent meetings.

I also recommend that Ambassador Bunker continue to urge the new GVN not only to pursue vigorously their National Reconciliation Program, but also to develop any leads for talks with the NLF or with its members.

W. Averell Harriman⁵

³ See Document 369.

⁴ See footnote 5, Document 357.

⁵ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature. Below the signature is the following typed postscript: "Otherwise, I felt the meetings were extremely interesting & constructive."

381. Memorandum From the President's Special Consultant
(Taylor) to President Johnson¹

Washington, November 3, 1967.

Mr. President:

Walt Rostow has asked my comments on the following possible course of action:

Proposal

The U.S. will stabilize its military strength in Vietnam at presently approved levels and, with its allies, will continue to conduct the war in South Vietnam essentially as at present, making every effort to hold down U.S. casualties and battle damage and to pass the burden of the fighting to the South Vietnamese.

There will be no extension of the air target system in North Vietnam beyond the present one and no blockade or mining of the ports. At some point, we will stop the bombing of North Vietnam except for the use of air strikes in the Demilitarized Zone to suppress shelling or to interdict enemy troop movements.

The purpose of the foregoing course of action would be to allay apprehensions at home and abroad of a further expansion of the conflict and to increase the pressure on Hanoi to reduce its military activities or to enter upon negotiations. It is my understanding that all or most of our intentions under this alternative would be announced publicly.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, March 19, 1970 Memos to the President. Secret. In an attached covering memorandum to the President, November 3, Rostow wrote: "Herewith General Taylor's arguments in response to those I gave him from the unidentified paper. He will be filing a paper of his own in a few days." A notation at the bottom of this note in the President's handwriting reads: "Walt call me. L."

Comment

Of the alternatives² open to the U.S., this is one form of the Pull-back Alternative. While this course of action might tend to allay the fears of those who are concerned over an expansion of the conflict, it would provide fresh ammunition for the numerically larger number of critics who say that we are embarked on an endless and hopeless struggle or that we are really not trying to win. The decrease in our efforts implicit in this proposal would tend to nullify by a form of self-stagnation the progress which we properly contend that we are now making and would give renewed stimulus to our impatient fellow citizens who are even now crying for a quick solution or get out. Like other variations of the Pull-back Alternative, it would probably degenerate into an eventual pull-out.

The curtailment of the bombing under this proposal has all the liabilities which we have noted in previous discussions of this issue. The South Vietnamese would be deeply discouraged by this lifting of the penalty which the bombing imposes on the North. I would suspect that our other allies contributing troops would object strongly to this course of action—they are convinced of the essentiality of the bombing. Our own forces would regard this action as a deliberate decrease in the protection which, they feel, is afforded them by the bombing. The large majority of our citizens who believe in the bombing but who thus far have been silent could be expected to raise violent objections on the home front, probably surpassing in volume the present criticisms of the anti-bombers.

Probably the most serious objection of all to this Pull-back Alternative would be the effect upon the enemy. Any such retreat will be interpreted as weakness and will add to the difficulty of getting any kind of eventual solution compatible with our overall objective of an

² There are four in all: Pull-out, Pull-back, All-out, Stick-it-out. [Footnote in the source text.]

independent South Vietnam free from the threat of subversive aggression.

I would recommend strongly against adopting any such course of action.³

M. D. T.

³ On November 6 Taylor submitted an additional memorandum to the President outlining his personal analysis of the policy options available to both sides. For the U.S. Government (labeled "Blue") these options included "stick it out," "all out," "pull-back," negotiations under favorable conditions. For the North Vietnamese (termed "Red") the options were "hang on," "escalate," "pull-back," and negotiations. Taylor concluded that "Blue" should "stick it out" but be prepared to undertake an expansion of the war effort only if "Red" chose to do so first. He believed that "Red" would maintain its present level of fighting until it could feign a "pull-back" and await altered conditions in South Vietnam. (Ibid., Gen. Taylor (1 of 2)) The President requested that members of Katzenbach's so-called Non-group consider the choices in Taylor's memorandum. (Memorandum from Rostow to Katzenbach, November 20; *ibid.*, 2C(1)a-General Military Activity) A November 22 memorandum from the CIA asserted "substantial agreement" with Taylor's estimate of the situation in Vietnam and his conclusions. (Ibid., Chron. File on Negotiations–1967) On November 24 Wheeler stated his preference to "stick-it-out" with additional military actions that included limited ground operations in Laos, air strikes on enemy bases in Cambodia, raids north of the DMZ, and a reduction of the sanctuaries around Hanoi and Haiphong. (Memorandum from Wheeler to Katzenbach, November 24, CM–2782–67; *ibid.*, Files of Walt Rostow, July–Dec. 1967)

382. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, November 3, 1967.

Mr. President:

I did not take full notes in yesterday's advisory meeting;² but I did try to list suggestions for action.

Here is my list.

Dean Acheson:

- organize citizen's committees in all cities over 100,000;
- get fresh faces to defend our Viet Nam policy.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Memos to the President, Walt Rostow, Vol. 51 (2 of 2). Secret.

² See Document 377.

McGeorge Bundy:

- cool attention to bombing: make it routine;
- reward in White House ceremonies those who have done great work in the provinces, military and civilians;
- assure that military men on advisory duty in pacification are promoted on same basis as those in combat;
- develop publicity that Vietnamese are doing more, and make sure they do;
- shift our stance on negotiations to one of not expecting negotiations until after November 1968;
- dramatize that we have already won a great strategic victory in Asia: lift people's eyes from Viet Nam to the whole scene;
- brief the key editors and communicators just as the group was briefed (Dick Helms has no objection to using Carver when it's off-the-record and no public attribution);
- let good news speak for itself: don't strain publicly to convince people progress is being made.

Douglas Dillon:

- spend time not on how we got into Viet Nam, but on position we're in and real choices we face;
- clarify what we are doing on the ground and in bombing;
- develop a sense of progress: sense of stalemate is what invites extreme doves and hawks; let events speak for themselves, but there are ways of getting good news out;
- have Bunker—a fresh and trusted voice—report to the nation;
- the President should brief top college presidents and deans as Advisory Group was briefed.

Arthur Dean:

- clarify our "get out of Viet Nam" position: if we're really going to get out, why spend all this blood and treasure?
- explain critical importance of Viet Nam to our Asia and Pacific positions: people don't understand implications for U.S. national interest of loss of Viet Nam;
- avoid another Panmunjom.

Cabot Lodge:

- an independent audit of the pace and success of the revamping and reorientation of the ARVN;
- limit U.S. casualties by diminishing "search and destroy" operations, substituting a doctrine of "split up and keep off balance";
- encourage a "true resolution" in South Viet Nam by throwing our weight behind private cooperative institutions such as farmers'

unions, marketing organizations, which would stimulate, agitate, and engage the people themselves and begin to push the French and Chinese middlemen to the wall. (WWR comment: the French and Chinese businessmen ought to be moving into light industry at this stage of Vietnamese development.)

—agreed with Acheson on a no-bombing versus DMZ deal;

—urged that Bunker and his views be given maximum exposure.

Robert Murphy:

—sharpen focus and action against small group of Hanoi villains: we have no target for hate in this, as opposed to other wars.

General Omar Bradley:

—talk less about negotiations: Hanoi takes it as a sign of weakness;

—use “Patience” as a slogan.

General Maxwell Taylor:

—questions close-in defense of DMZ;

—decide what we are prepared to offer the VC; that is a major gap in our policy and ought to be filled;

—bombing should *not* be traded against DMZ pressure but against level of VC incidents in the South; bombing is our equivalent of guerilla warfare;

—organize nationwide, continuous campaign of speeches in support of policy;

—organize an hour TV program regularly: government replies to its citizens on Viet Nam, answering questions.

George Ball:

—stop bombing, except across the DMZ, to create climate for negotiation.

Abe Fortas:

—get George Carver to briefing on television. (Dean Acheson, Dick Helms, and others objected to using Carver in public.)

Clark Clifford:

—bring Thieu to the United States (Nick Katzenbach implied we should make sure his political base in Saigon would be safe during such a tour).

W.W.R.³

³ Printed from a copy that bears these typed initials.

383. Telegram From the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker) to the President's Special Assistant (Rostow), Secretary of State Rusk, Secretary of Defense McNamara, and Director of Central Intelligence Helms¹

Saigon, November 4, 1967, 0522Z.

CAS 456. In my meeting with President Thieu this morning, I described the developments of the Buttercup case since 18 August when General Loan advised us of Sau Ha's arrest and provided a CAS officer with a copy of Sau Ha's letter. The President was told of the arrangements worked out for the release of [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] and for his return to the VC zone to meet with Buttercup/1 in order to transmit a reply which had been approved in Saigon and Washington and had been reviewed by General Loan, and which expressed American willingness to cooperate in a prisoner exchange. In showing the President a copy in the original Vietnamese of the response just received via [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*],² I summarized its contents and apparent significance.

I explained that our principal concern at this time is to develop through this channel a reciprocal release of American and Vietnamese prisoners, that we wish to consider with President Thieu or his designee the release of NLF prisoners as requested by Buttercup/1, and that careful consideration should be given to our action regarding the NLF prisoners for whom Buttercup/1 requested better treatment. I noted further that the letter from Buttercup/1 was not limited to the treatment of the prisoner matter alone but expanded on political matters. While we do not conclude that there is immediate potential in this channel for influencing NLF positions, we regard it as a definite advantage both to ourselves and the GVN to give the sponsors of the message the impression that their move is welcome and that they will find us receptive to discreet communications they may send in the future. We may therefore wish to consider in our reply to Buttercup/1 a restrained forthright statement of U.S. objectives and aims.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–7 VIET S/BUTTERCUP. Secret; Nodis; Buttercup; Via CAS Channels; Exclusive. As reported in telegram CAS 421, November 2, Bunker initially informed Thieu only “that there had been some very interesting developments as a result of these efforts” during a brief meeting that day. (Ibid.)

² See Document 369.

I emphasized that we wished to proceed in fullest consultation with the GVN and that in order to accomplish this, a CAS officer known to President Thieu will contact him shortly to provide additional background and information, and to ascertain from the President how he wishes to proceed with the arrangements which will be necessary in order to make a positive response to Buttercup/1.

Comment: The President listened attentively to my exposition, read the original letter from Sau Ha and scanned the lengthy letter which we have just received from Buttercup/1. He was in agreement with my proposal that the matter be further developed through CAS channels and this will be undertaken immediately.

384. Telephone Conversation Between President Johnson and Former President Eisenhower¹

Washington, November 4, 1967, 10:05 a.m.

Eisenhower: Well, how've you been, Mr. President?

President: I'm doing fine under the circumstances. We're getting this government off reasonably good. I don't want them to bother you, but I sure do want to keep you informed, and I told McNamara to see you because I thought it would be good for McNamara. I think that he and General Goodpaster—Goodpaster is just wonderful—but I thought maybe a little touch of you, given your views and philosophizing with this fellow, would be a little helpful.

We've got a project we call Buttercup that shows that the South Vietnamese are kind of playing a little bit with the NLF and talking to them about exchanging prisoners and we got some exchanged yesterday for the first time. And then they are talking about how they might talk and this fellow Thieu, most of the people think, I'm not very good at evaluating him, but most of the folks think, Westmoreland and Bunker and them—and incidentally, Mr. President, I think we've got the best team we could have, so I just have confidence in them and try to support them—but they think that Thieu is going to be better than

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and Eisenhower, November 4, 1967, 10:05 a.m., Tape F67.14, Side B, PNO 3 and 4. No classification marking. This transcript was prepared in the Office of the Historian specifically for this volume.

Ky. He's a little more reserved and a little more judicious and a little tougher and maybe not quite so gay and showmanship, you know. And so we are working on that a good deal and I am having a meeting, I just called it now for 11:30, to talk to Rusk and McNamara and them again about releasing some more prisoners. They want some more exchanges. So that is rather encouraging.

Eisenhower: That is.

President: General Bradley just came back. He says . . .

Eisenhower: From where?

President: From Vietnam. He says they have 12 and 13 year old kids, and the report from Bunker this week shows that one province out of Saigon in the III Corps that's made up of about 500,000 people, and the Viet Cong have just picked up and evacuated. They just can't live. They are running out of food and their battalions are splitting up. So all of these little things, and we are afraid to say it because they hit our credibility and if it doesn't come true why this happens. Bunker is coming in here. If you could sit down with Bunker—do you know Bunker?

Eisenhower: Oh, very well. He was Ambassador when I was President—in India.²

President: Well, he was a Republican businessman in Vermont that made a good deal of money, somebody said, and decided to retire and retired. They started to pull him into the government for every tough assignment and in the Dominican Republic it was impossible, but he went down there with all of those Commies—there were three groups of them: Chinese, Castro, and Soviet—and he whipped them all. And he says that he is bringing this thing through. I'd like for you to see him when he comes back. He's going to be here in about 10 days.

Eisenhower: Well, I'm going out to California the first of December.

President: I am jealous of you. I want to quit and come out there and play golf myself.

Eisenhower: Well, I'll tell you, I will be here through November, though.

President: Wonderful, wonderful. Well, if you are and if you can, I'd like to send him over and spend 30 minutes with you.

Eisenhower: Well, I'll tell you, I get my briefings that I've had, I am very much encouraged on the military side of this, and particularly what has pleased me is the increasing percentage of those people that have the courage to go and vote. That shows that they're getting greater confidence.

² Bunker was Ambassador to India during the years 1956–1961.

President: General, we took us from 1776 to 1789 to get a Constitution in this country, and we had all that Anglo-Saxon heritage and background and freedom. Now these people in 13 months have had 5 elections and we have shoved them and Bunker has shoved them, maybe a little too fast, Westmoreland. But the fact is that they had a higher percentage of their total people voting than we have and they've had five elections and they have ratified a Constitution and they've elected a House and a Senate and a President and Vice President and I think that is pretty encouraging.

Eisenhower: I do too.³

[Here follows discussion of personal matters and comments on the political situation in South Asia.]

³ In a briefing for Eisenhower on November 9, Goodpaster told him: "He [Johnson] plans to plead for a 'common sense' approach on the war. He thinks that many of the current charges against it are being made out of ignorance." (Memorandum for the Record, November 9; Johnson Library, National Security File, Name File, President Eisenhower (1965–1968) [1 of 2])

385. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, November 4, 1967, 10:15 a.m.

Mr. President:

Here are the McNamara and Mac Bundy positions you asked me to compare.

McNamara

Mac Bundy

General:

An announced new policy of stabilization.

No major change in public posture established in San Antonio speech.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Walt Rostow, McNamara, Robert S.—Southeast Asia. Top Secret; Sensitive; Literally Eyes Only for the President.

Bombing:

Unilateral stand-down to await Hanoi reaction.

Against:

- any unconditional pause;
- any extended pause for sake of appearances;
- any major headline-making intensification of the bombing.

U.S. Troops:

No increase beyond current approved level.

No large-scale reinforcements beyond totals already agreed.

Mac Bundy did not address himself explicitly to the following list of points made by Secretary McNamara. Presumably he would agree with the following list, within the general framework of existing policy rather than a new announced policy of “stabilization.”

—There will be no call up of reserves.

—No expansion of ground action will be undertaken in North Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia.

—No attempt will be made to deny sea imports into North Vietnam.

—No effort will be made to break the will of the North by an air campaign on the dikes, locks or populated targets—efforts will be made to hold down civilian casualties in the North.

—We will engage in continued efforts to restrict the war.

—We will endeavor to maintain our current rates of progress but with lesser US casualties and lesser destruction in South Vietnam.

—We will be willing to accept slow but steady progress for whatever period is required to move the North Vietnamese to abandon their attempt to gain political control in South Vietnam by military means.

—In light of the political progress of the GVN, we will gradually transfer the major burden of the fighting to the South Vietnamese forces.

Walt

386. Memorandum From the President's Assistant (Jones) to President Johnson¹

Washington, November 4, 1967.

SUBJECT

Luncheon meeting with Secretaries Rusk and McNamara, Walt Rostow, CIA Director Richard Helms, George Christian and Jim Jones.

Meeting convened at 2:20 p.m., Saturday, November 4, 1967

Meeting adjourned at 3:55 p.m.

[Here follows discussion of the Middle East, consideration of Deputy Ambassador Eugene Locke for the post of Ambassador to the Philippines, and crime in the District of Columbia.]

The President asked that Rusk and Wheeler and Helms and McNamara put together a high level task force to make a campaign pamphlet of three pages answering all the questions on Vietnam, such as stopping the bombing and negotiations. The President said to get the ten most asked questions and get them answered so that all a person has to do is make a speech from the pamphlet.

The group adjourned for lunch and the President opened the luncheon conversation by asking about Buttercup response. "Are both Bunker and Westmoreland coming back?" the President asked.

McNamara replied that Bunker would be leaving on November 9 and Westmoreland on November 15.

On Buttercup, Rusk said that Bunker is inclined to release several of the Viet Cong before they agree to release the Americans.

The President said I am inclined to agree, at least let the first five or six go. The President said that he does not like to override his man in the field (Bunker) nor does he like to see McNamara and Rusk override him any more than McNamara or Rusk like to be overridden by the President.

Rusk said "You've got to make arrangements with the other side. Bunker can tell the other people you are ready to release . . ."

The President then read the cable² and reiterated that he does not believe we should overrule Bunker's recommendation.

Rusk said it would be alright if we could add the following "after taking fully into account our observations back here."

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Meeting Notes File, Folder #5. No classification marking.

² Document 383.

The President asked how we are going to do a better job of winning the war in the South. He asked if we could not have a military government put in the provinces and make them city managers like Tom Fletcher is in the District of Columbia. The President said "we've been on dead center for the last year." The President also wondered whether the bombing of the small tire factories, steel mills and airfields are "worth all the hell we are catching here." The President thought perhaps we should get into a position where we could strike and re-strike. He pointed out that it's very possible that we could get a no confidence vote any day now.

"Gallup and Harris say anyone could beat us. Gallup takes these polls a month old, jiggles them a little, and makes it look that way and the public believes them," the President said. The President mentioned that Senators Hartke, Fulbright and McCarthy are going to all the colleges and stirring up problems and we are not answering them. He pointed out that Princeton got a resolution just yesterday.

The President turned his attention to the troubles at home and said "I'm not going to let the Communists take this government and they're doing it right now." The President pointed out that he has been protecting civil liberties since he was nine years old, but "I told the Attorney General that I am not going to let 200,000 of these people ruin everything for the 200 million Americans. I've got my belly full of seeing these people put on a Communist plane and shipped all over this country. I want someone to carefully look at who leaves this country, where they go, why they are going, and if they're going to Hanoi, how are we going to keep them from getting back into this country."

Dick Helms said under the laws today you cannot prosecute anybody for anything.

The President said that the Leadership of Congress told him Monday at their weekly meeting³ that they would give the President anything he wants. "In fact, they are trying to give me an anti-riot bill which I do not want." The President said he talked to General Eisenhower today.⁴ "I think you (Eisenhower) would be good for Secretary McNamara, and McNamara would be good for you. I told him that I would give him anything he wants in the way of a map room, intelligence briefings or whatever to keep him informed. General Goodpastor is doing a reasonably good job with him or he would not be with us," the President said.

³ The meeting with the Congressional leaders actually took place on Tuesday, October 31, 5:40–6:45 p.m. In attendance were Congressmen Albert, Moss, and McCormack, and Senators Mansfield, Long, and Byrd, as well as Postmaster General O'Brien. (Johnson Library, President's Daily Diary) Notes of the meeting have not been found.

⁴ See Document 384.

The President said we should emphasize that there are no deep divisions among the Joint Chiefs and the other advisers, and he said that's one of the reasons why he has not picked a Marine Commandant yet. "I'm going to take that man's blood pressure and make sure he's loyal. It doesn't do any good to win the fighting over there (Vietnam) and lose it over here. We've got to get our story told," the President said.

The President said he wants to make a tour on November 10 and 11 of military installations throughout the country so that he can salute the men "who keep me free." The President said that Eisenhower told him that we have forgotten what it means to be patriotic. The President said we need to get some of our secondary men like Kohler and Nitze, etc. to go out and speak and get our story across.

Secretary Rusk said concerning Vietnam, that if they are ready to have private talks without stopping the bombing, we should follow through. He said some encouraging signs have been heard this week by the Communists and Kosygin who are beginning to draw the line between Hanoi and the NLF. Rusk admitted however, that he does not think Moscow, nor for that matter Peking, has enough horsepower to deliver Hanoi.

The President asked if someone could talk to Thieu and get the corruption cleaned up. The President also said we are mishandling our information from Vietnam. He said Sigard Larmon has just come back from Vietnam and he is violently upset with the way the press is handling the situation there.

General Wheeler said that he sent Westmoreland a cable⁵ and asked him if he could find some way to preclude the press from flying on these combat missions.

The President said that all we have to do is to read what we've done in World War I and II and the Korean War concerning the information problem. He pointed out that we have not dealt with censorship at all. "Perhaps we should send three good editors out there to take a look at the situation and make some recommendations on how we can handle this better. Perhaps we could send Bill Stevens of the *Chicago Sun-Times* and Palmer Hoyt and maybe Hedley Donovan from the east coast," the President said.

[Here follows discussion of U.S.-Japanese relations.]

⁵ Not further identified.

387. Memorandum From the Associate Justice of the Supreme Court (Fortas) to President Johnson¹

Washington, November 5, 1967.

Comments.

1. The analysis and recommendations² are based, *almost entirely*, upon an assessment of U.S. public opinion and an *unspoken assumption* as to the effect that should be given to it. I am in *total disagreement*.

2. We *should not* assume that the American public are unwilling to sustain an indefinitely prolonged war. *If we should so assume*, we should not agree that it is either honorable or sensible for the administration to acquiesce in this and to base military decisions upon that assumption *unless and until the people through Congress or the polls make it impossible for this administration to do what it considers to be right in the national interest*.

3. *Our duty is to do what we consider right*—not what we consider (on a highly dubious basis with which I do *not* agree) the “American people” want. (I repeat that I believe they do not want us to achieve less than *our objectives*—namely, *to prevent North Vietnamese domination of South Vietnam by military force or subversion; and to continue to exert such influence as we reasonably can in Asia to prevent an ultimate Communist take-over.*)

4. Our *strategy* should be to exert increasing and continuing pressure on the North Vietnamese; and to increase our destruction of the Viet Cong by increased and more diversified military effectiveness and civil conversion in the South. Our *target* should be a cessation of organized military operations against us and the South Vietnamese, coupled as soon as possible with a South Vietnamese program designed, perhaps, to eliminate the NLF as an operating force either by viable coalition or by destroying its structure. “Negotiation” is *not* an objective or a target. It is a propaganda symbol that we should keep alive. It is a possible (but not probable) stage toward achieving our objective; and it is a probable (but not certain) tactic that the enemy will adopt.

5. I can think of nothing *worse* than the suggested program—stating that we are going to “stabilize” our level of military effort and halting the bombing. This is an invitation to slaughter. *It will, indeed, produce demands in this country to withdraw*—and, in fact, it must be appraised for what it is: *a step in the process of withdrawal*. And, in my opinion, it means *not* domestic appeasement, but domestic repudiation

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, March 19, 1970 Memo to the President. Top Secret.

² A reference to Document 375.

(which it would deserve); a powerful tonic to Chinese Communist effectiveness in the world; and a profound retreat to the Asian dominoes.

6. Again, I can only repeat that the proposal to halt the bombing makes no sense. Its domestic good-effects would be illusory. It's not what the "doves" really want: the leaders want us to quit seeking our objective in Vietnam and Asia; the ordinary doves—the masses on that side—want us to achieve our objectives, to halt Communism, to defend Asia, but to do it without inflicting or receiving the wounds of battle. If we halt bombing, our armed forces are exposed; our pressure on North Vietnam is at an end; we will have given the Communists victory which they will exploit and escalate.

On the other hand, if Hanoi wishes to talk or to de-escalate, *it is preposterous*, I submit, to suppose that they are waiting for a signal—and that the only signal acceptable is a halt in bombing!

7. I must frankly state again that I am not convinced that our military program in South Vietnam is as flexible or ingenious as it could be. I know that new proposals have been sought from our military. But perhaps a new and fresh look, including new people—civilians as well as military—might be warranted.

Abe Fortas³

³ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

388. Memorandum by the Chairman of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (Clifford)¹

Washington, November 7, 1967.

I disagree with the recommendations presented in the memorandum of November 1, 1967.² I believe that the course of action suggested therein will retard the possibility of concluding the conflict rather than accelerating it.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Walt Rostow, Vietnam, Conduct of War. No classification marking; the covering note is marked Top Secret; Eyes Only.

² Document 375.

The question is often asked: Why does North Vietnam continue to prosecute the war when it appears that they have no chance of winning it?

The answer is clear. Hanoi is depending upon a weakening of the will of the United States to carry on the war. Their previous experience with the French has convinced them that the same result will occur again insofar as the United States is concerned.

It is my opinion that Hanoi will never seek a cessation of the conflict if they think our determination is lessening. On the other hand, if our pressure is unremitting and their losses continue to grow, and hope fades for any sign of weakening on our part, then some day they will conclude that the game is not worth the candle.

If one accepts this premise, then the course of action recommended in the memorandum must be subjected to the test of Hanoi's reaction.

It is suggested in the memo that there be "complete cessation of bombing in the North." The argument is made that "it is probable that Hanoi would move to 'talks' perhaps within a few weeks after the bombing stopped."

I am at a loss to understand this logic. Would the unconditional suspension of the bombing, without any effort to extract a quid pro quo persuade Hanoi that we were firm and unyielding in our conviction to force them to desist from their aggressive designs?

The answer is a loud and resounding "no."

It would be interpreted by Hanoi as (a) evidence of our discouragement and frustration, and (b) an admission of the wrongness and immorality of our bombing of the North, and (c) the first step in our ultimate total disengagement from the conflict.

It would give an enormous lift to the spirits and morale of the North, and an equally grave setback to the will and determination of the South Vietnamese and our other allies fighting with us.

It would dramatically confirm the conviction of the North that Premier Pham Van Dong was correct when he said, "Americans do not like long, inconclusive wars; thus we are sure to win in the end."

The cessation of the bombing would be used to great advantage to repair roads and bridges, improve anti-aircraft defenses, and build up the war-making potential of the North. The Chinese and Russians would react enthusiastically to such cessation and would redouble their efforts to drive us out of Asia.

I think it is reckless to talk about resuming the bombing after such a suspension. It would create a storm of protest, which would be compounded by our greater losses of men and planes due to their improved air defenses.

I feel strongly that it is grossly fallacious to contend that we are

fighting two wars: the war in the South and a separate war in the North. They are part and parcel of our single effort to convince Hanoi that it must abandon its effort to conquer South Vietnam.

The second recommendation in the memo is that we "stabilize" our military effort in the South.

This would be achieved by stating "publicly" that we would not increase our forces; we would not call up reserves; we would not expand ground action in North Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia; we would not attack North Vietnam seaports; we would not hit the dikes or locks; and we would engage in continued efforts to restrict the war.

Can there be any doubt as to the North Vietnamese reaction to such an announcement? The chortles of unholy glee issuing from Hanoi would be audible in every capital of the world.

Is this evidence of our zeal and courage to stay the course? Of course not! It would be interpreted to be exactly what it is. A resigned and discouraged effort to find a way out of a conflict for which we had lost our will and dedication.

And what of our bargaining position? It would have been utterly destroyed. Hanoi would be secure in the comforting thought that we had informed the world that we would refrain from practically all activities that would be damaging to North Vietnam.

It would be tantamount to turning over our hole card and showing Hanoi that it was a deuce.

Can one recall that we ever successfully terminated a war by such a program? In World War I, World War II and the Korean War, the pressure was constantly increased until the enemy found it intolerable and capitulated.

The President and every man around him wants to end the war. But the future of our children and grandchildren require that it be ended by accomplishing our purpose, i.e., the thwarting of the aggression by North Vietnam, aided by China and Russia.

Free peoples everywhere, and Communists everywhere, in fact the entire world, is watching to see if the United States meant what it said when it announced its intention to help defend South Vietnam.

It will affect the plans and intentions and aspirations of many people.

Because of the unique position we occupy in the world of today, we cannot expect other countries and other peoples to love us, but with courage and determination, and the help of God, we can make them respect us.

It is clear to me that the course of action offered in the memorandum does not accomplish this purpose.

389. Telegram From the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker) to the President's Special Assistant (Rostow), Secretary of State Rusk, Secretary of Defense McNamara, and Director of Central Intelligence Helms¹

Washington, November 7, 1967, 1124Z.

CAS 526. Refs: A. CAS Washington 49639;² B. CAS Saigon 499 (meeting with President Thieu);³ C. CAS Saigon 509 (meeting with General Loan).⁴

For Secretary from Ambassador Bunker.

1. In light of your comments in Ref A and now that the returns are in from our conversations with President Thieu and Loan (refs B and C), we concur with your suggested reply in para 5 with certain additions, for reasons I will describe below.

2. From our conversations with Thieu and Loan it is obvious that they both feel we should give no more to Buttercup/1 than he requested, that they distrust Buttercup/1 but, as Thieu puts it, we must "test" the NLF SVN sincerity although he doubts they are serious. Loan goes even further in suggesting we should force the NLF SVN to show its good faith by releasing two prisoners we name because the GVN has already released Buttercup/2 and would be releasing Sau Ha to comply with Buttercup/1's minimum requirements. (I know you agree that we must respect the opinions and suggestions of the GVN now and in the future developments in this matter. They are, in every respect, co-equals in this negotiation.) I, therefore, suggest that we be prepared in para 5 ref A ingoing message to request Buttercup/1 to re-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–7 VIET S/BUTTERCUP. Secret; Immediate; Nodis, Buttercup; Via CAS Channels; Exclusive. Received at 8:27 a.m.

² Not found.

³ In telegram CAS 499, November 6, Bunker reported that a [text not declassified] met with Thieu on November 5 to discuss the details of the Buttercup episode. Thieu emphasized the need for maximum secrecy and designated Loan as his action officer on the matter of prisoner exchanges (although reserving for himself the political aspects of the contact). (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–7 VIET S/BUTTERCUP) In telegram CAS 47716 to Bunker, October 28, Rusk underscored that it was "vitally important" for Bunker to inform Thieu of the NLF overture. (Ibid.)

⁴ In telegram CAS 509, November 7, Bunker reported a briefing [text not declassified] of Loan the previous day. Loan remarked that he "does not give a damn" about the release of Sau Ha but did not object to the release of other VC cadre arrested in conjunction with Sau Ha's capture because the NLF was "asking for too much at this point." He thought it more likely that Sau Ha would refuse to return to COSVN as a result of the damage he had caused with his admissions to the GVN. The NLF needed to demonstrate a better "show of faith" other than simply returning an envoy that the GVN had already released. (Ibid.)

lease two American POWs (to be named at your discretion) to show his (their) good faith. If Buttercup/1 responds favorably, we will have telescoped the time element I foresee between now and the initial release of POWs.⁵

3. Both in the ingoing message and in the oral briefing we plan to give to Buttercup/2 we will stress the need for safe and rapid means of future communications and urge Buttercup/1 to open the radio link. I am not sanguine, however, that Buttercup/1 et al will use the radio communications channel at all, and if they do, then only at a much later date. We are, therefore, faced with the probability that even if we can arrange to have Buttercup/1 airlifted to a point closer than Tay Ninh City, subsequent dialogue and arrangements will at best be cumbersome, tedious and time consuming. In short, quick reaction by our side and the other will not be possible in this context.

4. Re subject of responding to broader political questions raised by Buttercup/1: as you know President Thieu reserves to himself a key role in deciding on what will be said in our joint response. His position in this matter promises to be one of great restraining, distrust, and cynicism; therefore, I plan on getting his concurrence in a response to Buttercup/1 that will be brief, avoid giving the other side too much opportunity for their famous affinity towards polemics while reiterating our objectives and aims in Vietnam and encouraging the possibility of further exchanges of viewpoints either in the established [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] channel or in personal meetings at a locale agreeable to all concerned. I will separately forward a suggested response, on these political aspects, that may be acceptable to President Thieu and subject to your prior concurrence.

⁵ Locke later proposed that the message should request a reciprocal number of prisoner releases from the NLF. (Telegram CAS 576, November 10; *ibid.*)

390. Summary of Notes of the 578th Meeting of the National Security Council¹

Washington, November 8, 1967, 10:05–10:55 a.m.

(The list of attendees is attached including members of the Cabinet and the legislative leaders who had been invited for this special meeting.)²

The President: Opened the meeting by speaking of the difficult situation we face in Vietnam. We need all the help we can get in dealing with a problem which affects our national prestige. Council members, along with the Cabinet Secretaries and the Legislative leaders, had been called in to hear a report by the Vice President on his recent trip to Asia. Following his report, the Vice President would answer questions from any of those present.

The Vice President: He had visited Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia.³ His report, of necessity, would consist of his personal observations. Comparisons would be made on what has happened in Vietnam in the last 20 months, when he was last there in February of 1966.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, NSC Meetings, Vol. 4, Tab 60, 11/8/67. Secret; Sensitive; For the President Only. Drafted by Bromley Smith.

² The attached list is not printed. The attendees included the President, the Vice President, Rostow, Rusk, Tom Johnson, Christian, Smith, McNamara, Wheeler, Office of Emergency Preparedness Director Prince Daniel, USIA Director Leonard Marks, Secretary of the Treasury Henry Fowler, Attorney General Ramsey Clark, Postmaster General Lawrence O'Brien, Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall, Secretary of Commerce Alexander Trowbridge, Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare John Gardner, Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Robert Weaver, Secretary of Transportation Alan Boyd, Senators Mansfield, Russell, Fulbright, Margaret Chase Smith, and Carl Hayden, Speaker of the House John McCormack, and Representatives William Bates (R-MA) and George Mahon (D-TX).

³ Humphrey traveled to East Asia October 26–November 6. During the period October 29 through November 1, he visited South Vietnam in order to attend the inauguration ceremonies of Thieu and Ky and to inspect U.S. forces. Telegrams reporting on his trip are in National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 7 US/HUMPHREY; Johnson Library, National Security File, International Meetings and Travel File, V.P. Asia Trip, 10–11/67, Briefing Book–Background; and *ibid.*, White House Central Files, Confidential File, CO 312 Vietnam (1967). A chronology of his trip, briefings, and telegrams and memoranda of conversation reporting his discussions with Thieu and Ky are in Department of State, International Conference Files: Lot 68 D 453, Vice President Humphrey's Asian Trips, Vols. 1–10. Humphrey submitted to the President a 38-page report dated November 7, which listed his recommendations for assistance to Vietnam, Malaysia, and Indonesia. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, I E(1), Post Inaugural Political Activity) From 9:42 a.m. to 10:03 a.m. earlier the morning of November 8, Humphrey met with the President and Rostow to brief them personally on his mission. (*Ibid.*, Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings)

1. The United States team in Saigon has the confidence of the Vietnamese and of the representatives of the allied states taking part in the Vietnam war.

2. During conversations with both Thieu and Ky, he emphasized the importance of the relationship of these two leaders to each other and to the legislature.

3. The inaugural speech of Thieu was his own, not ghost written. Thieu is a serious man who appears to be fully aware of the importance of providing a stable government in South Vietnam.

4. Thieu was told flatly that progress towards the goals mentioned in his inaugural speech was most important to the continued support, not only of the governments, but also of the people—of the allied countries supporting South Vietnam.

Military:

1. The spirit and morale of United States forces in Vietnam are high.

2. The United States-South Vietnamese Riverine Operation in the IV Corps is tremendously impressive.

3. The ARVN is improving, according to General Abrams, who is devoting his full time to this problem.

4. The ARVN fights well in some areas and not well in others, depending on its leaders.

5. The Vietnamese are fighting corruption among the military and promotions are now being made on the basis of merit.

6. Field promotions following successful operations have recently been inaugurated.

7. The Vietnamese Regional and Popular Forces needed additional training.

Political:

1. We should stop using the word “pacification” since it connotes a peaceful operation—exactly the opposite of what is really involved. Obtaining security in rural areas is the toughest kind of a job which claims numerous lives.

2. Revolutionary Development is beginning to move. Cadre training is now very well done. Nine thousand trainees attend the Revolutionary Development school for twelve weeks. Thirty thousand cadres are already in the field. Sixty thousand will be at work in rural areas by 1968. The head of the RD training program said that the major problems in order of importance were corruption and the Viet Cong.

3. The current campaign against corruption would move forward.

In summary: He was encouraged by his trip. The successful election process had produced a very good effect in Vietnam. U.S. logistics had vastly improved since his last visit. With respect to contribution of other nations, the new Thai troops are doing very well, the Koreans are extraordinary, and the Australian units' morale is very high.

Two problems which need attention:

1. The Communists are trying to win over the youth of South Vietnam. In Saigon, the youth problem needs immediate attention.

2. The South Vietnam Information Service is very poor. Correspondents attached to the South Vietnamese troops are not well provided for. In general, the South Vietnamese performance is not well reported because of the inadequacy of their treatment of U.S. correspondents. As for the U.S. press corps in South Vietnam, most responsible correspondents support our goals, even though they may be critical of certain actions which we have taken.

Turning to the other two countries visited, he said the acting head of Indonesia, General Suharto, and the Malaysian Prime Minister both told him that if the United States fails in Vietnam, all hope for a free Southeast Asia would be lost.

In Malaysia the Prime Minister said that the enemy in Southeast Asia is militant Asian Communism with headquarters in Peking.

Throughout his trip, he encountered no act of hostility or protest in either Malaysia or Indonesia.

[Here follows a brief discussion of Indonesia.]

Referring again to the progress being made in Vietnam, he said Thieu is neither arrogant nor abrasive, but he will not be a puppet. He appears willing to probe for peace. He may have trouble with the legislature which will soon be causing problems for him and for us—the price of encouraging Vietnam to start down the democratic road.

In conclusion: Not all is well in South Vietnam but it is better than it was 20 months ago. We are making progress and we shall continue to progress.

The President: Asked Secretary Rusk if he wished to comment.

Secretary Rusk: Merely wished to point out that Thieu would be shortly announcing the new South Vietnamese Cabinet. As to Indonesia, he called attention to the help being given to Indonesia by many nations through multilateral organizations such as the World Bank and the Indonesian Consortium.

The President: Informed the group that Ambassador Bunker and General Westmoreland would soon be coming to Washington for consultation. Both would be available to appropriate committees should they desire to hear them.

Secretary McNamara: Delighted to hear the Vice President's report of progress in the military area. The military team in Saigon, Westmoreland, Abrams and Palmer, comprised our greatest military leaders.

General Wheeler: Seconded the comment made by Secretary McNamara.

The President: Continued around the table offering the participants the opportunity to ask questions.

Senator Hayden: No questions.

Senator Margaret Chase Smith: No questions.

Senator Fulbright: (To the Vice President) What is our objective in Vietnam?

The Vice President: The Malaysian Prime Minister adequately described our objective when he said the Malaysian defeat of the communists consisted of defeating the insurgency and building a nation. Malaysia had the help of the United Kingdom; Vietnam was being helped to build its nation by the United States.

Senator Fulbright: (To the Vice President) Did you say Peking was our enemy?

The Vice President: What he said was that the Asians believed their enemy was Peking.

Senator Fulbright: Who is the enemy—Peking or Ho Chi Minh?

The Vice President: The Vietnamese know their enemy is the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese. Wounded South Vietnamese soldiers know who the enemy is.

Senator Mansfield: Pleased to hear the mildly encouraging report of the Vice President. What is the monthly infiltration rate of North Vietnamese?

The Vice President: He had not asked this question in Saigon. Our team in South Vietnam supports the bombing. Our military leaders have no doubt that they can handle anything the Viet Cong or North Vietnamese could put against them. The very young Viet Cong prisoners we have captured are proof that the Viet Cong are having manpower and recruitment problems.

In a heart-to-heart talk, Ambassador Bunker said what is bothering him is why some people think he would be trying to deceive his fellow citizens. Bunker said his record of public service in many countries as well as his private life made clear the kind of a person he was and is. Bunker could not understand why some should now say that he is a different person than he had been in earlier years. Bunker said that all he is interested in doing at his age in life is working constantly to advance U.S. interests in Vietnam.

Senator Mansfield: Last September he had asked General Westmoreland about the monthly infiltration rate: the answer was approximately 6,500 to 7,000 per month. How does North Vietnam and Viet Cong strength compare with a year ago?

The Vice President: The strength is about the same as a year ago.

Senator Russell: The Vice President has made a fine statement which possibly could be boiled down a bit. When the laughter died down he commented that the bombing had not prevented a manpower buildup nor the movement of large amounts of ammunition. What is the view with respect to a proposal to close the Port of Haiphong?

The Vice President: Recent bombing had been effective in sealing off the harbor of Haiphong from the interior. The Haiphong to Hanoi corridor had been hit effectively. Restrikes are continually necessary in order to keep the destroyed bridges from being repaired. All military commanders realize that air power is only one part of our overall military strategy in Vietnam.

Senator Russell: How can the Viet Cong move the thousands of tons of ammunition used against our forces in South Vietnam?

The Vice President: Viet Cong supplies are moved at night and some move through Laos and Cambodia. He had heard no complaint from the military about military decisions taken in Washington. Military officers indicated that they are pleased by the recent addition of certain targets which give them greater flexibility to conduct the air war.

Congressman Bates: Referred to a recent article in *Look* by General Bradley and asked how long our military leaders in Saigon thought the war would last.⁴

The Vice President: He had encountered no prophets. Military officers agreed that the military effort of the Vietnamese is improving. We are making progress in the war. Ky was told of the severe criticism of the ARVN by U.S. citizens. Ky had instructed the ARVN to go on a 7-day week basis and additional efforts are being made to improve the training of the ARVN.

Representative Mahon: Has our stand in Vietnam affected the situation in Indonesia?

The Vice President: Our stand in Vietnam has had a collateral effect on developments in Indonesia. He had said in Djakarta that the

⁴ Reference is to retired General of the Army Omar Bradley's article, "My Visit to Vietnam," *Look*, November 14, 1967, pp. 29–35.

change in Indonesia had been brought about by Indonesians and that it came about as a result not of our actions but theirs. However, it is thought that our presence in Southeast Asia gave confidence to the Indonesians to destroy the Communist Party in Indonesia.⁵

(Note: Tom Johnson also has notes on this meeting.)⁶

Bromley Smith

⁵ Humphrey discussed his trip in a speech in New York City on November 13. See *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1967*, pp. 1022–1026.

⁶ Tom Johnson's notes of the meeting, November 8, 10:05–10:55 a.m., are in the Johnson Library, Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings. From 1 to 2:15 p.m. later that day, the President met with Rusk, McNamara, Rostow, and Christian. (*Ibid.*, President's Daily Diary) Notes of the meeting have not been found. Presumably it was at this meeting that the President authorized 17 new targets in the Hanoi–Haiphong area.

391. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, November 8, 1967, 1255Z.

10641. For the President from Bunker. Herewith my twenty-eighth weekly telegram:

A. General

1. In the aftermath of the elections, the inauguration, and national day, a rather general feeling prevails that hopefully a new era is beginning in South Viet-Nam. This has been reflected in comments in the press that a new historic period is opening and in urging all the people "from the battlefield to the rear" to join together in renewed effort. Pride has been expressed that a popularly elected government with a constitution guaranteeing democratic freedoms for the entire people has come into being; and confidence has been expressed that the sec-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Immediate; Nodis. Received at 9:48 a.m. and passed to the White House. A notation on Rostow's note transmitting the telegram to the President, November 8, reads: "7:05 p, ps 11/18/67," indicating that the President saw it at that time. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 8B(1)[B]) This telegram is printed in full in Pike, *The Bunker Papers*, pp. 234–241.

ond republic would be able to instill enthusiasm in the whole people for their nation building work and for the struggle against Communist aggression.

2. Among the voters there was a feeling of pride tinged with some skepticism; they had turned out in large numbers and had done their job, now it was time to see whether the newly elected candidates could do theirs.

3. The intense activity that preceded the inauguration of the President and Vice President and the installation of the lower house of the Assembly last week has been followed by a noticeable slowing of the pace of political activity this week. This has been chiefly concentrated in the efforts of the new Prime Minister to form his government and in the organization of the Senate, and in efforts by Thieu and Ky to marshal support for the government among members of both houses of the Assembly. Loc told me yesterday that he had completed his Cabinet list and that announcement would be made November 9, which apparently is an auspicious day. I hope to be informed of the identities of the new Cabinet members when I see President Thieu later today.²

4. The Assembly is continuing its work on organization and has completed Part I governing the organization of the upper house and is continuing its work on regulations and procedures. It is hoped that the entire rules which may include as many as 200 articles can be completed in another two weeks.

5. In the meantime there are a number of forward steps that have been taken by the government, some of which I have previously reported:

- A. The decree covering partial mobilization;
- B. The decree transferring collection of land taxes to the local governments;
- C. Stepping up of the moves against corruption;
- D. The process of selection and screening of new personnel for the positions of province and deputy province chiefs who would be re-

² On November 9 the 27-member Cabinet of the new Government of South Vietnam was sworn in. Retained from the previous Cabinet under former Prime Minister Nguyen Cao Ky were the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Interior, Revolutionary Development, Chieu Hoi, Economy, Health, and Veterans Affairs. In Intelligence Note No. 907 from Hughes to Rusk, November 13, INR noted that most of the Ministries transferred from military to civilian directors were minor ones. In addition, Northern-born individuals held the most senior positions. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 15–1 VIET S) According to telegram 11004 from Saigon, November 13, in accordance with the provisions of the new Constitution, at the time of its promulgation Thieu and Ky took a leave of absence without pay from the military. (Ibid.)

sponsible to the central government instead of to the corps commanders. Ky informed me yesterday that great care has been taken in the process of selection and screening, that he expected to have this completed by the end of this month and that he hoped to have the new personnel trained and installed by 1 February.

6. The transfer of power to collect land taxes to the local communities is a long step forward toward the revitalization of local government. I have urged on both Thieu and Ky that having done this, the next logical step would be to transfer the control of land reform to the village councils, and believe that this could be done through the issuance of an ordinance and I have given them a draft of an ordinance which we had prepared. Both expressed interest in the proposal and I shall be following up with them.

7. Another matter which I have discussed with them and shall be continuing to talk with them about with considerable urgency is the question of the forthcoming budget and economic stabilization. I have reported that Ky had informed me that a ceiling of 95 billion piasters had been established for next year's budget. Since then however an increase in military and police pay to take effect January 1, 1968 has been announced and yesterday Nguyen Huu Hanh, Governor of the National Bank, expressed to me doubt that the budget could be held below 100 billion piasters. In this connection I have expressed to both Thieu and Ky our view that it is absolutely essential that taxes be increased. I have left with them a memorandum proposing an increase in poll taxes which in our view would be the easiest and quickest way to raise additional revenue. Yesterday, however, Hanh expressed to me the view that other taxes especially import tariffs should be increased, and the tax collection system must be further improved. If these things were done he felt that the gap between revenue and expenditures could be held to 15 billion piasters.

8. In a talk with Ky yesterday³ I found him in a good mood and was encouraged to see that he has now focussed on moving ahead with vital government programs which hopefully will bring early and constructive results. I also have the impression both from his comments and from sources near Thieu that they are both keeping more closely in touch on development of political support for the government.

9. Ky commented at some length on what his major concerns will be in the new government. The anti-corruption program would be one. He noted that in III Corps alone some 75 officials have been removed for corruption this year. Ky also plans to devote a good deal of his time to pacification and coordination in this field among Generals Thang,

³ Also reported in telegram 10563 from Saigon, November 7. (Ibid.)

Vien, and Tri, and he will personally spend a good deal of his time in the provinces, examining the situation. Ky said he was worried about the generally poor conditions under which the RVNAF operate, citing problems of inadequate pay, difficulties in getting food, etc., observing that something needed to be done for them but the GVN simply didn't have the money.

10. I told Ky I had no official instructions yet regarding a possible stand down over the forthcoming holiday periods but would like to know his personal views, since he had been so intimately involved in the matter last year. Ky said he thought we should agree to have a stand down, preferably 24 hours for Christmas, 24 hours for New Year's, and 48 hours for Tet, since these are traditional holidays. He thought it important that we take the initiative rather than let Hanoi or the VC get the benefit of it.

[Here follows discussion of military, political, and economic matters.]

Bunker

392. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam¹

Washington, November 9, 1967, 0055Z.

66947. Ref: Saigon's 10232.²

1. We plan to review Viet-Nam/UN question with Ambassador Bunker in Washington but if matter raised with you in interim you may draw on following.

2. Although Congress has not yet adopted Mansfield resolution and Security Council members still preoccupied with very active Middle East negotiations, we contemplate that our consultations in New York may lead to actual convening of SC and effort to inscribe Viet-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 27 VIET S/UN. Secret; Exdis. Drafted by Gleysteen; cleared by Sisco, Goldberg, and Habib; and approved by Bundy. Repeated to USUN.

² In telegram 10232, November 2, Bunker discussed his meeting with Thieu on the Mansfield Resolution. Thieu suggested that in the event of North Vietnamese rejection of a direct GVN approach to open a dialogue, he would then appeal to the United Nations for consideration of the Vietnam issue. (Ibid.)

Nam problem on agenda. This does not mean we have assurance we can obtain nine votes necessary for inscription; nor, in light of our experiences in 1966, would inscription necessarily bring any meaningful consideration of issue in SC.

3. In general, we believe prospects of accomplishing inscription as result of GVN initiative would be very poor. Some SC members who might otherwise be persuaded to vote for inscription following US initiative would clearly resist GVN initiative on grounds that it far more certain to stir unhelpful negative response from Communist side.

4. In these circumstances we believe best approach for time being re GVN and UN would be for GVN to react positively to US initiative. If we move formally to convene Council, for example, GVN could welcome SC consideration and perhaps send letter to SC President requesting GVN participation and suggesting principles consistent with but not exact reproduction of those contained in US draft resolution.

5. Ambassador Goldberg would wish to concert closely with GVN UN Rep, and he will be in touch with him prior to SC move.

Rusk

393. Memorandum From McGeorge Bundy to President Johnson¹

Washington, November 10, 1967.

SUBJECT

A commentary on the Vietnam discussion of November 2

I think your instruction to me was to give a brief summary of that discussion, and I also think you were incautious enough to ask for my

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Memos to the President, Walt Rostow, Vol. 50 (1 of 2). Secret. In a covering memorandum to the President, November 10, Bundy wrote: "Here at last is the commentary on the November 2 meeting you asked from me. It is much longer than I wish it were, and I apologize. It also moves out to some uncharted ground, but that is less my fault than the fault of Taylor and Lodge for having raised a couple of thought-provoking questions during the meeting." In the November 13 memorandum that transmitted this memorandum to the President, Rostow wrote: "Herewith Mac Bundy summarizes the meeting of November 2 and proposes, in the end, that we search for a pattern of 'some feasible de-escalation based upon success and not failure.' I have tried to mark the critical passages in this interesting piece of paper." (Ibid.) Rostow highlighted sentences in most paragraphs.

comments, so the following memo treats each of the five questions you put to the meeting, first by reporting what consensus there was in the answers, and second by offering my own resulting comments. One of the reasons for my delay in reporting in is that I found the discussion enormously interesting and have found my own mind stretched to some new thoughts as a result.

I have somewhat rearranged the order of your initial questions because I think there is a certain logic in taking the most clear-cut answers first.

1. Should we pull out?

The answer to this was a strong and unanimous negative. No one present would quit without a satisfactory settlement. There may well be important latent differences about the kind of settlement that would be acceptable. I suspect that George Ball would be inclined to settle for a deal which might eventually turn sour in the South. I think the rest of us would wish to stay there until there is a viable non-Communist South Vietnam. This difference is not currently critical.

2. What should we do about negotiations?

The general view is that there is no immediate prospect of serious negotiations. Mr. Acheson opened the meeting with a characteristically firm and categorical assertion that there would be no negotiations—that there never had been negotiations in any real sense with Communists, and that certainly there would be nothing of this sort before our next Presidential election. Most of those present agreed. The principal reservations came from Harriman and Rostow. Harriman continues to believe that the best road to peace lies through Communist capitals (and that he is the right man to travel that road). Harriman does not think that European Communists are watching our election date. Rostow believes that the Communist interest in reducing our presence, and the Communist need at some point for protection of their losers in the South, may lead to real negotiations.

My own comment is that while Acheson has much the better of the argument, we can probably have our cake and eat it on this one. I see no harm in careful exploration by Harriman, and we can certainly be ready for the kind of real talks which Rostow envisages when and if the times comes. What I think we should *not* do is to act as if we ourselves believed there was much chance of real negotiations in the early future. We have been ready for them; we are ready for them; we keep checking to see if they are possible; but the Communists do not want them.

I think there could well be a careful statement about the poor prospect for early negotiations, but I wonder whether it should come

from the Government. I think the Secretary of State would not be persuasive with doves and moderates on this matter, because they have chosen to believe that he never wanted the negotiations in the first place. The one person in the Government, oddly enough, who might carry conviction with the academic community on this point is Brzezinski in the Policy and Planning Staff. There would also be some appeal in a careful analysis by Katzenbach. Still another alternative would be to get the point made by wise men outside the Government and then refer to their comments. My brother Bill would know which academic men have the most standing on this point. Whoever does it, the point to be made is not that we don't *want* negotiations, but that we don't *expect* them from the Communists now, and that even if talks do become possible, we must expect Communist negotiators to act like Communist negotiators.

3. *What should we do about the bombing in North Vietnam?*

There was broad agreement that the bombing of the North should be continued unless we get a real quid pro quo on the ground. All of those who spoke except George Ball believe that the bombing is an important part of our whole campaign. All who touched the subject felt that bombing should be restricted to military targets. Several spoke clearly against mining of Haiphong or bombing the irrigation dikes; a few also indicated a desire to reduce the level of the bombing somewhat. Nobody explicitly advocated mining or attack on the dikes—although Mr. Murphy said he would follow the Joint Chiefs of Staff on such matters. Several speakers associated themselves with Secretary McNamara's argument before the Stennis Committee, but several others said that the bombing has important values above and beyond its admittedly limited effect upon what can be moved from North to South.

My estimate of the consensus is that there would be general support for a possibility you outlined at the end of the meeting—namely that when the currently approved targets have been struck, you should clearly rule out any proposal for major widening of the bombing in the North, and should ask the Chiefs to plan a redeployment of air power against targets which would *not* constitute "escalation"—with due allowance for necessary restrikes.

If you should decide to move in this direction, I believe it would be highly desirable for you and the two Secretaries and the Joint Chiefs to come to a solid internal understanding on this whole question which would apply to the next fifteen months. There is no doubt that the public airing of differences between McNamara and the top brass has created some confusion, especially when followed by air operations which seemed inconsistent with one or another of the McNamara arguments.

And on their side, the top brass have given the impression that they could have done things much better if they had been allowed to do them their own way. This pulling and hauling has been natural, and to some degree inevitable, but the discussion of November 2 suggests that we may be reaching a point where you can find a solid position from which to put a stop to it. You have great assets in such an effort, and you have not yet drawn much on your account of straight loyalty from your top military men. My impression is that they still feel cut off from you and somehow think that they really do not get your ear as much as they should. (Naturally it never occurs to them that their real trouble may be simply that they have not got a very good case, and that you may find them as tiresome as any other powerful but narrow-minded pressure group.)

I believe that if you reach a basic command judgment which clearly defines the future of the bombing in the North, you can put a stop to the sort of thing that has happened in the last few months. I share what I think is a majority view of the outsiders that such a clear delimitation would be of real political value with moderates at home and with worried friends abroad. It would help to stop the foolish and false talk about a collision course with China, and it would help to meet the need for a real focusing of the attention of all toward the South, which remains the real battlefield. Such an internal decision would also require—and permit—a gradual reframing of the position of the Secretary of Defense himself. Bob McNamara has tended to focus his attention very sharply upon the single issue of the relation between the bombing in the North and supply and reinforcement in the South. While I tend to agree with him on this emphasis, I do not think it was the emphasis of the majority of those who spoke on November 2, nor do I think it the strongest position for you, all things considered, in the next fifteen months. I therefore believe that Bob should be asked to join in a rationale for the bombing which is a little wider than what he has been using in his wholly understandable argumentation before the Stennis Committee. This is not a matter of a drastic change in his position, but simply a question of reframing it so as to give more emphasis to the element of increased military cost which is a legitimate purpose of bombing.

If I may add one individual comment which does not come out of the discussion of November 2, I would also be inclined to press the Chiefs hard on the question of civilian casualties (both North and South). No matter how often they are pressed on the point, airmen just do not give the kind of attention to this issue that any civilian would wish if he were watching the matter himself. (I first learned this lesson from Colonel Stimson when he was telling me how he was hornswoggled by Hap Arnold on just this point.)

One question which was only briefly argued is whether there should or should not be a pause. Nobody proposed an unconditional pause, but there were several who did urge one form or another of bombing suspension aimed at a possible response by action, and not words alone, from the North. Mr. Acheson thought it would be good if we could trade the bombing for the end of attacks across the DMZ, and one or two others agreed. General Taylor thought this a bad swap and would prefer to trade the bombing of the North against incidents in the South. Still others appeared not to believe that any pause would be productive.

This subject is an obvious candidate for further study. My own belief is that problems of weather and timing make it very difficult to give clear-cut signals that would relate any pauses in the bombing to specific military actions by the enemy. I just don't think we are likely to be that smooth and sophisticated, in the light of the legitimate pressures for continuous use of air power on the lines of communication from the North. I think the case to beat is the case for not having any pause at all (except for short holidays). I think that if such a position is reached within the Government, it should be very carefully expounded, either by the President himself or by Under Secretary Katzenbach. Such a speech should be cleared at the top, whoever gives it, and it might well be an occasion also for such public redefinition of our bombing policy as may become possible after the currently listed targets have been struck.

4. What more can we do in the South?

Few of the speakers were really knowledgeable about events in the South and it is not surprising that most of them refrained from specific suggestions. If there was a general refrain, it was aimed at the need to increase both the reality and the appearance of Vietnamese activity all along the line.

The one area on which I would offer special comment is the one touched on by both Lodge and Taylor. They were the two men with most direct experience in Vietnam, and I found it interesting and troubling that both of them raised important questions about the military tactics now being followed. General Taylor was worried about the fixed positions on the DMZ and in the highlands. Ambassador Lodge questioned the wisdom of large-scale search and destroy operations such as those planned for the Delta. Lodge and I raised the question whether casualties must be expected to continue at their present level and even increase. This specific question was related to the general comment of several others that the prospect of endless inconclusive fighting is the most serious single cause of domestic disquiet about the war.

The discussion permits no conclusion on these questions but it does suggest the importance of a careful review at the highest military

and civilian levels. It is obviously a highly sensitive matter to question the tactical judgment of the commander in the field. But it is equally obvious that you have every reason to satisfy yourself about questions of the importance of those raised by Lodge and Taylor.

If the battles near the borders are not wise, or if search and destroy operations in heavily populated areas are likely to be politically destructive, then the plans of the field commander must be seriously questioned. I see no alternative here but to have a very carefully prepared discussion with General Westmoreland, preferably after a good hard look on the spot by junior officers who might be chosen specifically for their acceptability in Saigon.

I should emphasize that what I am suggesting here is something that really has not been done in this war so far, to the best of my knowledge. For extremely good reasons the top men in Washington have kept their hands off the tactical conduct of the war, and most discussions have been directed rather to questions of force levels in the South and bombing limits in the North. (Even in Saigon the successive Ambassadors have been careful to keep out of military matters.) But now that the principal battleground is in domestic opinion, I believe the Commander-in-Chief has both the right and the duty to go further. I don't think anyone can predict the result of such an inquiry, but neither do I see how you can be asked to deal with the home front until you are satisfied that the plan of action in Vietnam—North *and* South—is the one you want.

One obvious difficulty which stands in the way of this kind of policy-making is the risk that there will be leaks of one sort or another which would lead to charges that the whole thing is politically inspired, and governed by election-year thinking. Certainly there would be such leaks and such criticism, but strong answers are available. In the first place, it is entirely legitimate to seek to define and then to explain the policy in terms that will be persuasive at home. But even more persuasive is the fact that clarity of definition is at least as much needed for success in Vietnam as for strengthening public opinion at home. If our present tactics are right from this point of view, all they need is persuasive exposition (which they have not had: how many of us could explain what Westy's strategy really is?). If they need adjustment, to avoid the costs of escalation in the North, and to minimize the danger of political disaffection in the South, then the adjustments are needed *on their own merits*, and not simply from the point of view of U.S. public opinion.

What I think I am recommending is simply that the Commander-in-Chief should visibly take command of a contest that is more political in its character than any in our history except the Civil War (where Lincoln interfered *much* more than you have). I think the visible exercise of his authority is not only best for the war but also best for public opin-

ion—and also best for the internal confidence of the Government. Briefings which cite the latest statistics have lost their power to persuade. So have spectacular summits. These things are not worth one-quarter of what would be gained by the gradual emergence of the fact that the President himself—in his capacity as political leader and Commander-in-Chief—is shaping a campaign which is gradually increasing in its success and gradually decreasing in its cost in American lives and money.

Obviously it would be wrong to prejudge the policy which would emerge from the kind of review I am recommending. But my own hunch is that there may be a really good chance of reaching an agreed program, among civilians and military men alike, which would have these general characteristics:

(1) It could be *less* expensive in lives by involving fewer exposures to ambush and also by adopting the best tactics of the most successful local commanders.

(2) It could be *much less* expensive in money. (There just has to be an end of the cost of build-up at some point, and we ought not to let anyone believe that the dollar in Vietnam doesn't matter. It matters like Hell to our ability to stay the course.)

(3) It could be *more* effective politically in South Vietnam: all evidence of care and control and patient endurance will help on this front.

(4) It could *enlarge* the real and visible role of the South Vietnamese. There is a good deal of reason for driving home our insistence on their help even by just not doing things they won't join in.

(5) It could still keep plenty of pressure on the Communists.

(6) It could make it plain that we are over the hump. (In a funny, reverse-English way, it occurs to me that such a change of gears could have the same effect in Vietnam as the shift from Walker to Ridgway had in Korea.)

(7) It could establish a pattern of gradually decreasing cost that would be endurable for the *five or ten years* that I think are predicted by most of the wisest officials in Vietnam. If one thing is more clear than another, it is that we simply are not going to go on at the present rate for that length of time, and since I think the Communists have proved more stubborn than we expected at every stage, I think that sooner or later we are going to have to find a way of doing this job that is endurable in cost for a long pull.

I do have to admit that I can't prove that the time has come to make this shift. But the sooner that time comes—the less we engage in overkill—the better for all concerned. And the sooner it *is* possible to develop this kind of program, the better it will be, in straight foreign policy terms. It would also, quite obviously, be helpful on the hardest question of all:

5. *What can be done to pull the home front together?*

On this point the advice of last week's group was very mixed. Some seemed to feel that the best course was to march straight ahead without fretting over criticism. While others shared the view that the

Administration should not seem to be worried about its critics, they did not seem to feel that nothing ought to be done. A variety of proposals were put forward—to develop friendly television programs, to organize committees of speech-makers, to bring in the responsible top educators, to reach past the Congress to the people, to promote visits by Bunker or Thieu, and to publicize such favorable assessments as George Carver's (my own reading of Carver's report was somewhat less optimistic, given the necessary discount for a staff officer reporting to superiors who want to hear good news).

My own view of all this is that the advice to keep calm is excellent and that most of the rest is of marginal value—although I do believe in the value of visible support by those of us not in the Administration. I think we have tried too hard to convert public opinion by statistics and by spectacular visits of all sorts. I do have to say also that I think public discontent with the war is now wide and deep. One of the few things that helps us right now is public distaste for the violent doves—but I think people really are getting fed up with the endlessness of the fighting.

What really hurts, then, is not the arguments of the doves but the cost of the war in lives and money, coupled with the lack of light at the end of the tunnel. So I think changes in what actually happens in Vietnam are the only effective way of changing public attitudes at home, and I would come back to the notions put forward in the previous section of this memorandum as being the best I can offer on the home front as well. I can add only that if such a redirection of strategy and emphasis should occur, then I also think it would be highly important for us to explain—really for the first time—that this war has had a number of phases which are sharply different from each other (our tendency in the past has been to downplay the significance of moves from one phase to the next, but if we can get to a turndown of overall costs, I think we should candidly review the whole set of major decisions which have moved us up the hill and over the crest).

I apologize deeply for the length of this memo and for the degree to which it really goes beyond the actual discussion of last week. I still hold with all the things I said then and in earlier memoranda about not pausing, not negotiating, and not escalating. I now go on to say that I think some visible *de*-escalation, based on success and not failure, is the most promising path I can see. I can't prove this path exists, but I think we should search for it.

McG.B.

394. Memorandum Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency¹

Washington, undated.

SUBJECT

Analysis of Tran Bach Dang's Message²

1. *Is the message genuine?* Our reading of the evidence leads us to conclude that the message is what it purports to be—a communication from the Communist leadership of the National Liberation Front sent with Hanoi's approval. The case history of this episode, from Dang's dispatch of Sau Ha in July through Sau Ha's arrest with the initial letter to the Ambassador and the subsequent developments involving Tong (the intermediary), is plausible and holds together very well. Details obtained from debriefings of Tong following his abortive trip in September and his more recent successful mission, as well as our reading of his character, also bear up under intense scrutiny and cross-checking. The substance of the message is not inconsistent with previous reflections of the attitude of both Hanoi and the National Liberation Front (NLF) toward the war and the problem of negotiations. Finally, an initiative of this sort can be construed as a logical extension of the stated policies of both the Front and Hanoi as they have evolved over the years, and particularly over recent months.

2. *What does the message say?* Because the message is cast in the somewhat imprecise, dogmatic, and often contradictory language common to Communist correspondence, its substance is not clear. Our best interpretation, however, can be summarized as follows:

a. The NLF is prepared to discuss an exchange of prisoners if the Americans first demonstrate good faith by releasing Sau Ha and others associated with his case, and improving the treatment of other prisoners;

b. Discussions could later proceed to "larger political matters";

¹ Source: Central Intelligence Agency, DCI (Helms) Files, Job 80-B01285A, DCI (Helms) Chrono, Aug-Dec 1967. Top Secret; Sensitive. In a November 11 covering note to the President, Helms wrote: "1. Attached hereto is our analysis of the message received from the NLF via the emissary who returned it to Saigon. 2. Nothing has occurred since October 27, when we received this message, to cause us to believe that the operation, to this point, is other than valid."

² Tong returned to Saigon on October 26 with a letter of reply from Dang that had approval from COSVN. This letter included a request for the release of 10 prisoners held by the GVN and a restatement of the NLF platform. The letter is attached to the memorandum from Helms to Rostow, October 30. (Ibid., Executive Registry Subject Files, Job 80-R01580R, Vietnam)

c. A political solution to the war is possible, but only if the U.S. recognizes that it cannot defeat the Viet Cong militarily and cannot develop a strong GVN; time is on the side of the Viet Cong;

d. A political solution requires that the U.S. accept “in principle” four points (Vietnamese independence, U.S. troop withdrawal, establishment of a democratic and neutralist South Vietnam, and non-interference in internal Vietnamese affairs) as the basis for talks;

e. Talks to end the war based on these points can take place only between the U.S. and the NLF; the Front will not deal with Thieu and Ky, although GVN representatives could be included in the U.S. delegation;

f. The war in the North must be resolved separately between the U.S. and Hanoi;

g. Discussions on post-war political arrangements in South Vietnam can only involve the NLF and internal political forces outside the Front—not the GVN.

3. *What does the message mean?* The message represents an effort by the Communists—in the name of the NLF—to explore the willingness of the U.S. to resolve the war in the South by dealing directly with the Front. Beyond this, the Communists may hope to establish a dialogue through which the two sides can unofficially—but directly—come to an understanding of their respective views and positions on both the modalities and substance of a negotiated settlement. The prisoner exchange, in this event, would be primarily a device through which the two sides could demonstrate their good faith and thus create an environment favoring serious discussion of the broader issues.

4. This tactical gambit—almost certainly sanctioned by Hanoi—would be a logical outgrowth of Hanoi’s policy on negotiations as it has evolved since 1960. Since late last year, the Communists seem to have embarked on a campaign to improve the Front’s image both internally and internationally, a campaign that may reflect decisions embodied in the 13th Resolution of the Central Committee of the Lao Dong Party. In any event, beginning with the establishment of an NLF delegation in Hanoi, the Communists have increasingly emphasized the independence of the Front, its legitimacy as broadly representative of the South Vietnamese people, and the reasonableness of its policy regarding post-war developments. They have also sought to underscore their basic proposition that the war in the South can only be resolved by dealing directly with the NLF.

5. These nuances have reflected new emphasis on certain long-standing basic principles, rather than a real softening of Hanoi’s fundamental position. They have been accompanied by tactical shifts in the Communist negotiating posture, the first being the Trinh interview in January 1967 on the question of the bombing halt. The latest such shift—one leading to Dang’s message—is the proposition that the war in the South can be dealt with separately from the war in the North. This emphasis emerged in late June, and has been underscored in var-

ious diplomatic contacts since the conference of DRV Ambassadors in early July. It is possible that the original Dang message of late July relates to matters discussed at that conference, i.e., that Hanoi had refined its political offensive to include an effort to establish direct contact between the Front and the U.S. Embassy in Saigon. The four points listed by Dang as providing the basis for talks are consistent with Hanoi's four points, and the differences in Dang's formulation do not necessarily represent any softening in that regard.

6. If, by broaching the question of a prisoner exchange, the Communists were seeking to establish an avenue for political discussions with the U.S., their choice of this channel was probably influenced by several considerations. First, this is the most direct channel available—secure communications could be readily established. Because the U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam represents U.S. policy there, and is charged with supervising our conduct of the war, he can speak on substantive matters more readily than U.S. Ambassadors in other countries. The contact is placed directly in a quasi-diplomatic context, implying acceptance—if not formal recognition—of the Front as a political entity. Finally, the Communists may feel—as other Vietnamese did—that Ambassador Bunker's reputation as a negotiator was directly relevant to his appointment to the Saigon post.

7. *Why was the message sent?* One Communist objective in sending the message probably was to exacerbate GVN-U.S. relations by drawing us into direct contacts with the NLF. We believe, however, it is also a serious probe arising from their genuine willingness to explore the possibility of achieving a negotiated settlement on their quite rigid terms. We are inclined to doubt that it stems from any recognition by the Communists that their position is fundamentally weak. The strident professions of confidence in this message echo the dogmatic—and obstinate—faith in the validity of their People's War doctrine reflected elsewhere in Communist statements. The Communists seem still to believe that they can outlast us in the war because of their assumption that public opposition to the war in the U.S. will ultimately erode our will to persist. They evidently believe our increasing presence in the South reinforces the validity of their increasingly nationalist propaganda appeal. They may also see the democratization of the GVN as affording them new opportunities to coalesce support among non-Communist opposition groups, and thus to broaden their political effectiveness.

8. On the other hand, their protestations may mask genuine concern that their own position in the South could weaken over time. They may find the cost of the war increasingly intolerable. They may also be apprehensive lest the strengthening of the GVN's political posture gain real momentum over the long-term.

9. On balance, we feel that the initiative reflects a complex set of factors at work on their position. They probably now assume that the war will end ultimately in negotiations of some sort. They know they cannot win militarily, but they also believe that the U.S. cannot do so either. Thus neither side would be in a position to obtain its maximum objectives. While they believe they can more easily endure a “stale-mate” than the U.S. can, they almost certainly recognize that their position could be weaker a year hence. In these circumstances, we believe that the message probably reflects a real interest in probing the U.S. position on key issues.³

³ Difficulties in obtaining GVN concurrence in the release of the prisoners held up an immediate response. A message that called for the release of American and South Vietnamese prisoners as a demonstration of the NLF’s goodwill was sent back with both Sau Ha and Tong, who were also equipped with equipment necessary to make radio contact with the Americans. No discussions on political matters ever materialized, although continuing contacts resulted in the release of two American and several South Vietnamese prisoners. In turn, U.S. Government representatives arranged the release of six interned Viet Cong; among these was Dang’s wife, who was released on December 15. (Memorandum from Helms to Secretary of State William P. Rogers, January 27, 1969; *ibid.*, DCI (Helms) Files, Job 80–B01285A, DCI (Helms) Chrono, Jan–Jun 1969)

395. Memorandum From the Under Secretary of State (Katzenbach) to President Johnson¹

Washington, November 13, 1967.

SUBJECT

Highest Priority Areas in Viet-Nam

Our group² (Paul Nitze, Bus Wheeler, Walt Rostow, Dick Helms, Averell Harriman, Paul Warnke, Phil Habib, Bill Bundy and myself) addressed the question of what areas should receive the maximum attention and effort by the US in the next year in Viet-Nam.

The list we came up with, without dissent, concentrated on six main themes. They are chosen as themes with a potential short-term payoff, either here or in Viet-Nam. While we make an extra push on

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 1 C(2), Revolutionary Development Cadre. Top Secret.

² Reference is to the so-called “Non-group,” which met periodically to discuss issues on an informal basis.

them, we should continue our normal efforts, although I have a growing suspicion that we could make some cutbacks in some of our programs without damaging our over-all effort; this can only be done, however, with Ellsworth's full backing and participation.

Our list is quite similar to the present Mission priorities, so I think you will find Ellsworth in basic agreement with us.³

These are the items:

1. *Anti-corruption effort*—There was unanimous agreement that a visible and credible anti-corruption effort would help a great deal in improving the Administration's position, and in building a more effective GVN. (Bus Wheeler was particularly strong on this point.) Current efforts are still highly ambiguous; the quick trial and death sentence of one unfortunate ARVN officer is not the kind of sustained, serious campaign that is essential.

2. *ARVN performance*—Everything that can be done must be done to make the Vietnamese Army assume a greater portion of the war burden—*visibly*. While I do not think that we will be able to reduce the US troop role in the next year, we should be able to get more out of the ARVN, and we should have a better press policy to show that this is happening.

3. *Anti-infrastructure efforts*—This is probably the quickest payoff item around; while the CIA is going all out now on this effort, I think we can and should demand more from the GVN.

4. *Building Political Institutions*—We all agree that that is important, but unlike Walt Rostow, I tend to doubt that we can anticipate a really dramatic breakthrough on this one in the next year. The Vietnamese are feeling their way slowly in a world that is quite new to them, and while they learn—and write—the new rule book, they are not going to build great national parties. Any effort that Thieu made in that direction, as Ellsworth quoted Thieu as saying, would turn out to be a new version of the old secret parties which were so hated in Viet-Nam.

5. *Economic Stability*—I wish we didn't have to put this item on our list, but after analyzing the economic situation we are anticipating a probable inflation of about 40%. At the very best we could reduce it to about 25%, but if things get out of hand there could be as much as a 75% increase.

³ Bunker returned to Washington on November 10 and met with the President on November 13 from 11:32 a.m. to 1 p.m. (Johnson Library, President's Daily Diary) No notes of the meeting have been found, although an agenda prepared by Rostow indicates that four subjects were to be raised: the recent election, accelerated progress in various programs, the Buttercup initiative, and Bunker's schedule of public appearances. (Memorandum from Rostow to the President, November 11; *ibid.*, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Post Inaugural Political Activity, 1 E(1))

The projected inflation of 40%—which is about what we are experiencing in 1967—would not only wipe out the effects of any GVN wage increase that is granted, but it would also get the new government off on the wrong foot, and would make any serious anti-corruption campaign that much tougher. Incidentally, if there is a 50% inflation next year, plus a GVN wage increase, the real income of GVN officials and soldiers will be about half of the 1964 level—which itself was inadequate.

6. Efforts to get the GVN into contact with the VC—On this point, only Ellsworth can really make a dent. We can't push the GVN too hard, or they will think we are asking them to commit suicide. But we can definitely push them harder than they have been pushed in the past. There is no reason why representatives of the GVN, or of the legislature, could not meet with representatives of the Front. I do not think that such meetings would leave the GVN divided and on the verge of collapse, as some people do. Furthermore, if the GVN made its willingness to entertain such contacts clear its position and image would be far stronger than at present. Finally, it would be a major GVN response to the growing desire of the South Vietnamese people for some end to the war.⁴

The Mission's list is quite similar to our six items. It covered:

1. Mobilization measures.
2. Reorganization of RVNAF.
3. Reorganization of Civilian Administration.
4. Vital Pacification Measures in addition to above.
 - a. Attack on VC infrastructure.
 - b. Expanded detention centers and related judicial measures.
5. Attack on Corruption at all levels.
6. Economic stabilization measures.
7. Peace to include willingness to seek peaceful settlement, seek out members of NLF and move towards reintegration through national reconciliation.

Nicholas deB. Katzenbach

⁴ On November 11 Johnson included in his Veteran's Day remarks an offer to meet with a North Vietnamese delegation: "The United States follows the dream of peace; so we include even the seas in our search," the President asserted. "For us, the wardroom could easily be a conference room. A neutral ship on a neutral sea would be as good a meeting place as any." The full text of the speech is in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1967*, Book II, pp. 1017–1019.

396. Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (Bundy) to Secretary of State Rusk¹

Washington, November 13, 1967.

SUBJECT

Alternatives for Holiday Bombing Pauses

Discussion

1. *Question at Issue.* Leaving aside the separate issue of a more prolonged bombing suspension designed to achieve different objectives, we should consider the degree to which we will this year have holiday truces at Christmas, New Year's and Tet (January 28–February 3). We can anticipate that by Thanksgiving there is likely to be increasing public pressure to make our position clear on this question.

2. *US Position.* The Mission in Saigon has already sent its recommendations together with proposed rules of engagement (at clip).² The Mission proposes a 24-hour Christmas pause, no New Year's pause (although the Mission would accept one of 24-hour duration), and a 48-hour Tet ceasefire, with a maximum fallback position of 72 hours. We understand the JCS has recommended against any holiday ceasefire on military grounds. However, OSD at the working level appears to have no strong objection to the general nature of the Mission's recommendations.

3. *GVN Position.* As to the GVN position, Ky thinks we should agree to have a standdown, preferably 24 hours for Christmas, 24 hours for New Year's and 48 hours for Tet, since these are traditional holi-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET. Secret; Exdis. Drafted by Heyward Isham of the Vietnam Working Group on November 10 and cleared by Habib. Sent through Katzenbach. A notation by Read on the memorandum reads: "(Mr. Katzenbach concurs in the EA recommendation, but favors withholding decision concerning Tet until a later date.) EA points out that this would discriminate in favor of Christian holidays and notes that Thieu has already spoken publicly about all three holidays. BHR"

² Not printed. The attached telegram 8432 from Saigon, October 13, warned of the "critical sensitivity" of deciding upon a cease-fire schedule as soon as possible so that the administration would not be "pre-empted" by the other side. This was a position echoed by the South Vietnamese. During Bunker's conversation with Ky, reported in telegram 10641 from Saigon, November 8, Ky urged that "we take the initiative rather than let Hanoi or the VC get the benefit of it." (Ibid., POL 27 VIET S)

days. Thieu has commented along very similar lines, specifying the same number of hours. Thieu added that if there were intimations of other developments, we could explore them and decide what to do at the time. Press despatches November 11 quote Thieu as predicting that holiday pauses of the lengths specified above would be likely.

4. *Major Alternatives.* The principal alternatives, therefore, are:

(a) (JCS proposal)—Have no bombing suspension or ceasefire during these holiday periods, based on military considerations and the fraudulent manner in which the enemy has treated past ceasefires;

(b) Have the traditional holiday ceasefires and bombing suspension for 24 hours at Christmas, 24 hours at New Year's and 48 hours at Tet;

(c) Have the same ceasefire periods as paragraph 4(b) with the additional offer by the GVN to negotiate a supervised extension with NVN.

5. For political and psychological reasons we do not think that the JCS recommendation can be sustained and would therefore recommend against alternative 4(a).

6. In the light of the entirely negative response from Hanoi to last year's GVN offers to extend the holiday ceasefires, we see no point in repeating this offer, and recommend against 4(c).

7. Therefore, the best alternative in our view is alternative 4(b). The rules of engagement recommended by the Mission seem to us workable and acceptable, although we need clarification of the Embassy's suggestion on imposing a total freeze on logistics and force repositioning on both sides.

8. If, as is likely, the VC should declare either before or after our announcement that they plan to observe longer ceasefire periods, we will have to be prepared with suitable contingency statement. We should make clear that there are always means for conveying to the GVN the other side's interest in taking any mutual steps to scale down the level of hostilities, and that given past experience of enemy's violations of ceasefire and their efforts to exploit these periods to gain military advantage, we had concluded that any more protracted ceasefire periods would cause unacceptable risks to our forces.

9. *Timing of Announcement.* Judging from their past behavior, the North Vietnamese/Viet Cong will make every effort to impose a ceasefire in a manner which will buttress their own claim to command the military initiative and to exercise superior authority over US/GVN forces. It is therefore important that we pre-empt any such announcement in good time. Instead of making individual announcements on each of the three holiday ceasefires, we should consider this year

whether to announce all three at the same time and to do so as early as possible and no later than the end of November.

*Recommendation*³

10. That you seek the President's approval for the issuance of instructions authorizing holiday ceasefire and bombing suspensions over Christmas, New Year's and Tet of 24, 24, and 48 hours respectively, without any explicit offer of extension, and governed by the ground rules worked out by the Mission.

11. That you further seek the President's approval for the timing of a single announcement for all three holiday periods, to be made as soon as possible after consultation with the GVN and the other Manila allies. The announcement should be made by the GVN with simultaneous supporting statements in all allied capitals.

12. That you approve the guidance as given in paragraph 8 above if the contingency outlined therein arises.

³ There is no indication whether these recommendations were approved, but a note by Rusk on the first page reads: "Overtaken. DR"

397. Special National Intelligence Estimate¹

SNIE 14.3–67

Washington, November 13, 1967.

CAPABILITIES OF THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS FOR FIGHTING IN SOUTH VIETNAM²

The Problem

To estimate the capabilities of the Vietnamese Communists to conduct military operations in South Vietnam over the next year or so.³

Introductory Note

Our earlier understanding of overall Communist capabilities in Vietnam had, of necessity, to rely heavily on data provided by the GVN. Much of this turned out to be unreliable, and in many instances our numerical estimates of Communist forces, other than for the Regular units, were too low. Our information has improved substantially in the past year or two, but the unconventional nature of the war poses difficult intelligence problems, the more so in a social environment where basic data is incomplete and often untrustworthy.

Manpower, for example, is a key element for the Communists but we lack precise basic data on population size, rates of growth, and age distribution for both North and South Vietnam. Assessing Communist capabilities also involves an understanding of the organization and effectiveness of the various components in the Communist military and political apparatus in South Vietnam. Much of the evidence on these components is obtained from a variety of sources, including captured documents, of varying reliability and timeliness. The analysis of this data, as well as that concerning North Vietnamese support to the South

¹ Source: Department of State, INR/REA Files: Lot 90 D 99, National Intelligence Estimates; Special Intelligence Estimates. Top Secret. Submitted by the DCI and concurred in by the U.S. Intelligence Board. In a covering memorandum to the President, November 14, Helms cautioned that this SNIE was "sensitive and potentially controversial" because of the "variance" of its figures with past estimates. Because of this issue, Helms confided that he considered withholding the issuance of this SNIE. However, he had reconsidered since, in light of public knowledge of the discussions over the enemy order of battle, "the charge of bad faith or unwillingness to face the facts would be more generally damaging than the issuance of this document which can stand on its own feet." (Central Intelligence Agency, DCI (Helms) Files, Job 80–B01285A, DCI (Helms) Chrono, Aug–Dec 1967, 01 Aug–31 Dec 67)

² This estimate supersedes NIE 14.3–66, "North Vietnamese Military Potential for Fighting in South Vietnam," dated 7 July 1966, Top Secret. [Footnote in the source text.]

³ The figures in this estimate are current as of 1 October 1967. [Footnote in the source text.]

and all manpower questions requires complex methodological approaches which cannot rise above the uncertain data inputs.

Our data and conclusions are therefore subject to continuing review and revision, especially since capabilities do not remain static. In this estimate we have concentrated on reaching the best judgments of the current strength of the Communist forces and, because of incomplete and unreliable basic data, we have not attempted to reconstruct Communist strength retrospectively.

Reservations with respect to evidence are explained where appropriate in the individual sections of the estimate. The main conclusions which follow, however, allow for such uncertainties in the supporting intelligence, represent our best appreciation of the overall situation as it now stands, and are based on the assumption that there is no radical change in the scale and nature of the war.

Conclusions

A. During the past year, Hanoi's direct control and share of the burden of the war in South Vietnam has grown substantially. This trend will continue.

B. Manpower is a major problem confronting the Communists. Losses have been increasing and recruitment in South Vietnam is becoming more difficult. Despite heavy infiltration from North Vietnam, the strength of the Communist military forces and political organizations in South Vietnam declined in the last year.

C. The major portion of this decline has probably been felt at the lower levels, reflecting a deliberate policy of sacrificing these levels to maintain the structure of political cadres and the strength of the Regular military forces. In particular the guerrillas, now estimated to total some 70,000–90,000, have suffered a substantial reduction since the estimated peak of about early 1966. Regular force strength, now estimated at 118,000, has declined only slightly, but Viet Cong (VC) units are increasingly dependent upon North Vietnamese replacements.⁴

D. Given current Communist strategy, and levels of operations, a major effort will be necessary if the Regular forces and the guerrillas are to be maintained at or near present levels. To do so will require both a level of infiltration much higher than that observed in 1967 and intensive VC recruitment as well. Considering all the relevant factors, however, we believe there is a fairly good chance that the overall

⁴ In comparison, the forces arrayed against the Vietnamese Communists included: VNAF—730,000 (of which 327,000 were regulars), U.S.—470,000 (soon to be augmented by 45,000 personnel), ROK—45,000, Australia—6,300, Thailand—2,500 (also to be supplemented by 10,000 personnel), Philippines—2,000, and New Zealand—400.

strength and effectiveness of the military forces and the political infrastructure will continue to decline.

E. The Communist leadership is already having problems in maintaining morale and quality. These problems have not yet impaired overall military effectiveness, but they are likely to become more difficult.

F. Difficulties in internal distribution will continue to cause local shortages and interfere with Communist operations from time to time. But we believe that the Communists will be able to continue to meet at least their essential supply requirement for the level of forces and activities in South Vietnam described in this estimate.

G. Communist strategy is to sustain a protracted war of attrition and to persuade the US that it must pull out or settle on Hanoi's terms. Our judgment is that the Communists still retain adequate capabilities to support this strategy for at least another year. Whether or not Hanoi does in fact persist with this strategy depends not only on its capabilities to do so, but on a number of political and international considerations not treated in this estimate.

[Here follow additional estimates of enemy manpower. In addition to the enemy strength of 118,000 personnel for regular units (NVA/VC main and local forces) and an estimated 70,000–90,000 guerrillas cited in the conclusion above, the report added 35,000–40,000 in support elements (a maximum of 248,000 personnel). Outside of this total, the authors of the SNIE did not factor in militia-type units, such as the self-defense force, the secret self-defense forces, and the youth combat organization, all of which were too difficult, they believed, to estimate accurately, and the non-combatant political cadres, which numbered in the range of 75,000–85,000. They did admit previous underestimation of the non-regular military forces, and thus implied that the enemy did have a much larger overall organization than the SNIE's maximum military figure suggested. The estimate concludes by asserting that Communist infrastructure in Vietnam had been in decline since early 1966 and would continue to decline. However, it contained an admission that the enemy could persist at the current level of struggle for at least a year.]⁵

⁵ In a speech before the National Press Club, November 21, Westmoreland listed the elements of progress made by the allied side in South Vietnam and the myriad of problems faced by the enemy. For full text of the speech, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1967, pp. 1034–1038. The specific figures as listed in the SNIE were mentioned in a November 22 press briefing by Westmoreland in which he insisted that the enemy's ability to carry on the struggle had deteriorated. He suggested that the estimated 40,000 Communist troops that were lost during the summer of 1967 could not be replaced. He also acknowledged that the new estimate had not included Viet Cong political infrastructure in South Vietnam. The full revised estimate was made public on November 24. See *The New York Times*, November 23 and 25, 1967.

398. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, November 14, 1967, 0615Z.

11066. Department literally eyes only for Ambassador Bunker. Ref: Saigon 10987.²

1. In conversation with Calhoun November 11, Kieu made a direct request for U.S. financial assistance to support development of a pro-government political party. As noted in reftel, Kieu seemed to be thinking also of government financial support for a "loyal opposition" party. Although his presentation was rather imprecise and confused he gave the impression that the financial aid they would like from us would be used for the development of political parties in general, thus presumably including any assistance they might give to an opposition grouping. He stressed that the problems of initial organization and facilities were particularly difficult and posed requirements for financial resources which were not available to either a pro-government or a loyal opposition grouping.

2. In terms of loyal opposition, he seemed to be thinking of relatively tame supporters of Tran Van Huong and the Lien Truong and perhaps some Dai Viets, and not the more vocally critical elements, such as the militant Buddhists, represented to some degree in the lower house. As indicated, Calhoun cautioned against trying to create what may be largely artificial groupings which seem to fit their conception of what should be encouraged, rather than permitting natural political forces and trends to shape the structure to some degree. Kieu seemed to have in mind setting up two favored groups which could in effect take turns being the party in power.

3. Calhoun was of course non-committal about possibilities of furnishing any financial assistance, pointing out the difficulties posed and saying simply that he would look into the matter.

4. *Comment:* It is our assumption that Kieu was speaking on behalf of President Thieu since the latter had designated him as liaison for such matters with us. This approach tends to support the conclusion you reached during your meeting with Calhoun and Lapham last week, namely, that it would be useful to obtain authorization for cer-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, AID (US) VIET S. Secret; Nodis. Received at 2:23 a.m.

² Telegram 10987 from Saigon, November 13, reported separately on the aspect of the discussion between Calhoun and Nguyen Van Kieu, Thieu's brother, on November 11, specifically concerning appointments in the office of the Vietnamese President. (Ibid., POL 15 VIET S)

tain funds to be used selectively in accordance with your own judgments on the spot. We recommend that you pursue this idea in Washington and we can then discuss the answer to be made to Kieu after you return. We will certainly need to know more about their thinking and the form we think it should take before reaching a conclusion on Kieu's request.

Locke

399. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, November 15, 1967, 12:15 p.m.

Mr. President:

Herewith Dick Helms' memo to you on a new National Intelligence Estimate entitled "Capabilities of the Vietnamese Communists for Fighting in South Vietnam."² I have marked its main conclusions, summarized on the last two pages.

It comes to this:

- manpower is the major problem confronting the Communists;
- there has been a substantial reduction in guerrillas since an estimated peak in early 1966;
- there has been a slight reduction in main force units in the past year, but this has been possible only by using more North Vietnamese replacements in Viet Cong units;
- there is a "fairly good chance" that the Communist military strength and political infrastructure will continue to decline;
- Communist strategy is to sustain a protracted war of attrition and to persuade the United States that it must pull out or settle on Hanoi's terms. Their judgment is that the "Communists still retain adequate capabilities to support this strategy for at least another year."

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 3E(1)a, Future Military Operations in VN. Top Secret. The notation "ps" on the memorandum indicates that the President saw it. According to a November 20 memorandum from Bundy to the President, Rostow recommended that a briefing on the estimate "be held up until Westmoreland gives an over-all picture of the military side of the war in all its aspects." Rostow argued that the fact that guerrilla strength was underestimated in the past and that some groups were removed from the aggregate total would cause "cynical reactions" unless a wider picture of the war was presented. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Bundy Files: Lot 85 D 240, Top Secret WPB Chron, Nov/Dec 1967)

² Document 397.

The memo to you and the introductory note reflect a considerable debate in the intelligence community. The debate centers on the fact that they now know more from captured documents than they did about guerrillas, village defense forces, etc. What they know indicates that guerrilla strength was probably underestimated last year, but has declined substantially since.

I had urged that they do a retroactive estimate showing that decline; but they say they cannot do it, and confine themselves to the simple statement that the guerrillas "have suffered a substantial reduction."

The estimate does not deal with an important fact as estimated by Westmoreland and the JCS: namely, that there has been a very substantial decline in the past year in enemy main force battalions rated as "combat effective." (Buzz Wheeler told the group the other day, and confirmed to me on the telephone this morning that in October 1965 the enemy had 123 maneuver battalions, all rated combat effective. In October 1967 the enemy had 162 maneuver battalions, of which only 87 were rated combat effective.)

In general, this is a conservative estimate; but it is not a bad thing to build our plans on conservative estimates.

The one danger, of which Dick Helms is aware, is that the underestimate of guerrillas in 1966 be taken out of context and distorted, if leaked. They have tried hard to avoid that possibility.

I told Dick that the one sentence I would challenge is the marked sentence on page 1. I agree that the guerrilla figure was underestimated in 1966; but we have suffered in other areas from overestimation as well as underestimation in dealing with Communist capabilities. But that is not important.

Walt

400. Notes of Meeting¹

Washington, November 15, 1967, 2:16–3:20 p.m.

AMBASSADOR BUNKER

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH SECRETARY RUSK, SECRETARY McNAMARA, GENERAL WHEELER, CIA DIRECTOR HELMS, WALT ROSTOW, AND GEORGE CHRISTIAN

Prior to the President joining the meeting the group discussed the possibility of Secretary Rusk and Secretary McNamara appearing on the December 19 CBS program for a "year-end wrapup".

Secretary McNamara said he did not like the idea of spending a whole hour on Vietnam alone.

Secretary Rusk said Vietnam was the one area that he is completely clear on. George Christian said he was sure it would cover other areas, including NPT, ABM and relations with other countries.

George Christian said that Ambassador Bunker and General Westmoreland would appear on *Meet the Press* Sunday.

Ambassador Bunker reported on his morning meetings with Congressional committees and his appearance before the Overseas Press Club.²

The ambassador reported a good turnout and a receptive attitude in the meetings.

The ambassador said he reported "steady progress on the political, military, and economic front in South Vietnam."

Bunker: "I tried to point out that nation-building and rural reconstruction is as important as the military aspects. We are making progress on all fronts.

"The House Foreign Affairs Committee asked if South Vietnam would negotiate with the NLF. I said they were anxious to get into dialogue. I spent two hours with the House Foreign Affairs Committee. There was very little criticism.

"Most of the questions were in the center. I repeated the San Antonio formula. This seemed to calm them down.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings. Top Secret; Eyes Only. The date and time of the meeting do not appear on the notes but are taken from an attached November 16 covering memorandum from Tom Johnson to the President.

² For text of Bunker's remarks at the Overseas Press Club in New York on November 17, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1967, pp. 1028–1032.

"One congressman had a question about the charge that we never come forth with anything on negotiations which would not make it look like a defeat for Hanoi.

"I said that was correct if defeat meant that they must stop their aggression.

"Young Tunney's³ son did a lot of talking. My schedule for the remainder of the day is to meet at 4 p.m. with the Vice President and at 5 with the Peace with Freedom Committee."

General Wheeler then reported on the recent series of contacts around Dak To.⁴ The first contacts were on November 3. Another heavy engagement was on November 6. Other contacts were on November 8, 10, 11 and 13.

General Wheeler said there have been 102 U.S. KIA vs. 636 enemy KIA. In support of this operation have been 102 B-52 sorties, 81 of which have been in "close support". There also have been 1,116 tactical air sorties.

General Wheeler said the VC are attempting to achieve a dramatic victory and/or draw forces away from pacification. Ambassador Bunker agreed with this assessment.

The President asked if the quality of the South Vietnamese army has improved?

Ambassador Bunker said there has been substantial improvement in the South Vietnamese army. "The Vietnamese soldier is very good when he is well led. The press underrates the Vietnamese force. Out of 40 battles recently, they have had 35 successes. They are fighting in night actions now too.

"The press does not believe our head counts and KIA."

The President asked Director Helms to get what information the U.S. government has on head counts of enemy KIA and determine the accuracy of the head counts—see where we have made any errors, if indeed we have.

In addition, show them the enemy documents and correlate them with the body counts to see if there is a relationship. (Rostow said that enemy documents show about the same as the head counts which have been reported.)

The President then asked Ambassador Bunker what more he would do to bring the war to a conclusion if he were President.

³ Representative John V. Tunney (D-CA).

⁴ The heavy fighting around Dak To in Kontum Province, II CTZ, was part of the enemy's winter offensive, which began with the start of the dry season in November.

Ambassador Bunker said that if you take any time frame—six months, a year, two years—and compare it with the present there is evidence of a great deal of progress.

“I would do exactly what we are doing. The ratio of combat troops to support troops has reversed. There are now 39% support troops to 61% combat troops. We are going to get more troops from the Koreans and the Thais.”

President: What about pushing up the arrival time of more units?

General Wheeler: Two major elements already have been moved ahead—the 101st Airborne and the 11th Infantry. They will be in Vietnam before Christmas.

President: I want you men to do two things. First, get the number of targets down to the absolute minimum. Second, get the troops out there as rapidly as possible. I want to get these two things behind me.

President: While all of you are here this week, I want you to get together with General Westmoreland and think about what more—if anything—we should be doing.⁵

Ambassador Bunker: We are in a position now—with the ratio change of support to combat troops—to step it up steadily. We have good logistics now and there has been considerable ARVN improvement.

I believe the new government is committed to their program. We ought not try to shove more at them than they can handle.

We may have too many AID people over there now trying to do too much. There are some priorities for them, including the reorganizing of the army, the refugee problem, and land reform.

President: Have you seen any substantial changes in the six months you have been over there?

Ambassador Bunker: Yes, indeed. There is a significant change in the government—most improved. There has been a change in the political situation for the better. There now are local people getting involved in local government at village level. We are urging Ky and Thieu to put land control in the hands of the local people.

⁵ The President met with Westmoreland at 12:07 p.m. the next day in the White House. (Johnson Library, President's Daily Diary) Notes of the meeting have not been found, but an agenda prepared by Rostow for Johnson indicates that they were to discuss military policy and progress in Vietnam as well as specific issues such as the impact of an expansion of operations in the delta region and the reliability of the body count as an indicator. (Ibid., National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 1E(1), 10/66–12/67, Post Inaugural Political Activity)

Secretary Rusk then reported on Ambassador Goldberg's discussions at the U.N. on the Middle East question. The proposed trip to England by the Vice President also was discussed.

The President then said he wanted from Ambassador Bunker, Ambassador Komer, and General Westmoreland "an accurate assessment of things as they stand now."

"I want to see what else we can do."

"We need to get a better story to the American people."

The group then discussed the possibility of Jim Hagerty, former press Secretary to President Eisenhower, going to Vietnam for a short while to replace Barry Zorthian, joint Information Officer.

It was agreed he would be a good man for the job—but it was unlikely that Hagerty would leave ABC to take the post.

401. Memorandum From the Under Secretary of State (Katzenbach) to President Johnson¹

Washington, November 16, 1967.

[Here follow the first three parts of the memorandum (13 pages), in which Katzenbach described the nature of the fighting in Vietnam as exacerbating domestic opposition. He argued that the President could strengthen the political center in the United States by stemming the escalation in Vietnam.]

IV

Time is the crucial element at this stage of our involvement in Viet-Nam. Can the tortoise of progress in Viet-Nam stay ahead of the hare of dissent at home? All our present evidence points to the fact that

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, March 19, 1970 Memo to the President. Top Secret; Sensitive. In his November 16 covering memorandum to the President, Katzenbach wrote: "The enclosed memorandum on Viet-Nam represents my personal views which may not be shared by you or by my colleagues in the Administration. For this reason I am sending it directly to you for your consideration. Only Secretary Rusk, with whom I have not discussed this memorandum, has a copy." Rostow's memorandum transmitting Katzenbach's memorandum to the President, November 17, reads: "Herewith Nick Katzenbach sets down his personal view on an appropriate strategy for Vietnam." (Ibid.) The notation "ps" on the covering memorandum indicates that the President saw Katzenbach's memorandum.

progress in Viet-Nam will be steady but undramatic over next year. Yet slow and steady progress may not be enough if, as I suspect, the rate of US disenchantment with the war is growing rapidly. We must, it seems, find a way to change the pace at which events move on the two fronts—Viet-Nam and the United States.

The hope that this change can be accomplished by a rapid acceleration of our progress in Viet-Nam is a slim one. Even if we progressively remove the limits we have imposed on how and where we fight, there is little reason to believe that the end of the road would be significantly nearer. But it is certain that taking such action would greatly increase the volume of dissent at home and thus further encourage North Vietnamese hopes for an early US withdrawal.

Winston Churchill, speaking of traditional frontal conflicts, once said that in war “nothing succeeds like *excess*.” Hanoi is relying on our following that strategy in the very different context of Viet-Nam—a war which has as a principal battleground the minds of the American and Vietnamese people and in which the enemy has the power to deny us the opportunity to show to the public an end to the struggle. In this situation, excessive expenditures of men and money—which will not measurably shorten the war—are the surest route to failure, not to success.

If we can’t speed up the tortoise of demonstrable success in the field we must concentrate on slowing down the hare of dissent at home. At pages 7–11 above I have set forth in some detail the five general ways in which we could move in this direction. By way of conclusion I want only to suggest five specific measures.

1. *We should clarify our objective in South Viet-Nam* by updating NSAM 288 of March, 1964.² This NSAM, which is still used by our military commanders, states our objective in the following general terms: “We seek an independent non-Communist South Viet-Nam.” From this general statement the JCS and CINCPAC have derived the following specific mission and tasks for MACV:

a. “To make it as difficult and costly as possible for NVN to continue effective support of the Viet Cong and *to cause NVN to cease direction of the Viet Cong insurgency.*”

b. “To defeat decisively the Viet Cong and NVN in South Viet-Nam and *force the withdrawal of NVN forces.*”

c. “To extend GVN dominion, direction and control over South Viet-Nam.” (underlining added)³

² For text of NSAM No. 288, March 17, 1964, see *Foreign Relations*, 1964–1968, vol. I, Document 87.

³ Printed here in italics.

If I were given this mission I would follow the same strategy as General Westmoreland. But this mission overshoots our real objectives in SEA: *to provide the military cover and non-military assistance needed to enable the GVN to grow in capacity and popular support to the point where it can survive and, over a period of years, deal with what will remain a continuing and serious Communist problem.*

Unless we help General Westmoreland off the hook by writing a statement of objectives from which a more realistic and attainable mission can be derived, we will continually be faced by “thin edge of the wedge” requests from the military for expansion of the war.

2. *Instruct our field commanders, including Ambassador Bunker, to adjust their strategy and tactics to the revised objective.*

No one in Washington can second-guess the field on the details of strategy, at least not successfully. Therefore, in the first instance, I think we should ask Ambassador Bunker and General Westmoreland for their proposals, which we could then review in Washington to make sure they meet our requirements.

In rough outline, I would anticipate that such a change in objective and mission should mean that MACV would deploy its forces so as to minimize their involvement with the population, and to reduce substantially American involvement in those measures which should be the GVN’s responsibility. It would probably mean:

- a rigorous review of free bombing zones,
- a policy on refugees which would sharply reduce our vulnerabilities at home and around the world on this festering sore point,
- dramatic new efforts to reduce civilian casualties,
- and an end to the continual military requests for incremental expansions of the war into Laos, Cambodia and North Viet-Nam.

These steps, while controversial with the military, are not radical departures, and would not prevent General Westmoreland from achieving the mission and objective which we have set forth.

3. *Demand more of the GVN*—not only in the traditional ways, but also in seeking contact and accommodation with the NLF.

I am, of course, wholeheartedly in favor of the current drive to get the ARVN to assume a larger part of the war, the anti-corruption drive, and our other efforts to improve the GVN across the board. I would go further than we have yet gone and tell Thieu and Ky frankly that there are time limits on our commitment at its present level and that they had better face up to that fact and plan accordingly.

At the same time, I would like to see Ellsworth intensify his efforts to get the GVN into contact with the NLF. The risks are obvious, and only Ellsworth can determine the exact pace at which to move. But I feel strongly that we should look toward an accommodation and that Ellsworth can prod the GVN harder in this direction. Both these ac-

tions with regard to the GVN are implicit in the restatement of our objective which is discussed above.

4. *Stop bombing targets in the Hanoi–Haiphong area.* While, in the main body of this paper, I have advocated a qualified but indefinite halt in the bombing, I recognize that this is a special problem and not necessarily derivable from a restatement of objectives. I do feel, however, that we must at a minimum bring our target system into line with our objectives. Therefore, we should avoid targets which raise doubts as to our often stated position that we are not seeking to destroy the DRV.

5. *To tie all these themes together, develop over a period of weeks a public posture which rebuilds the confidence of the American center in our objectives and methods in Viet-Nam.*

Such a public policy would entail

—major but not dramatic statements by you and your principal deputies, including General Westmoreland, taking advantage of reports on recent progress;

—public statements by Thieu and Ky re-emphasizing their hope to see peace and the eventual control of South Viet-Nam by Southvietnamese without large numbers of Americans;

—and acts visible to the world showing that our rhetoric is matched by our deeds. The visible acts would be derived from points 2, 3 and 4 above.

Nicholas deB. Katzenbach

402. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam¹

Washington, November 19, 1967, 0220Z.

71813. 1. Following consultations with Ambassador Bunker, we have agreed upon the following proposed text of message from Thieu to Ho Chi Minh.² The Ambassador will take this up with Thieu upon his return.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Exdis. Drafted by Isham; cleared by Miller, Habib, Bundy, and Harriman; and approved by Rusk.

² In a November 16 memorandum to Rusk, Bundy confirmed the consensus view that the letter should be “general rather than over-specific” and “not too eager.” Bundy stated that delivery of the message through the Japanese Government would be the best route, although Japanese support of the U.S. position in Vietnam had caused “irritation” among the leadership in Hanoi. (Ibid., POL 15–1 VIET S)

2. As to the means of delivery, two principal alternatives are via Japanese, and via one of the ICC representatives. Each of these methods has advantages and disadvantages.

A) The Japanese would be a secure and willing channel and would know how to handle an outright NVN refusal to accept the message. On the other hand, Sato's³ recent visits to South Viet-Nam and the US have added to Hanoi's irritation over general Japanese support for US objectives in SEA, and no Japanese overture at this juncture is apt to go down well in Hanoi.⁴

B) As to ICC powers, each would have means of direct access to Hanoi and would probably be willing to undertake this task. Hanoi might be marginally more receptive to a GVN message delivered through this channel. The Poles are still charging us with bad faith over the abortive December initiative and their interest in sabotaging GVN initiative would probably be greater than any other ICC member. The Canadians, although no doubt willing enough, have been coldly received in Hanoi since the Martin proposal of last April. The Indians, despite their general anti-GVN bias, have had fairly regular contacts in Hanoi, and would probably act with reasonable discretion.

3. *Begin Text.* Your Excellency: Our people, from Lang Son to Ca Mau, have now undergone much suffering over a long period of time. Differences among Vietnamese on the basic questions affecting the future of our people cannot be resolved by force alone. Can those of us with differences that now appear irreconcilable discuss them in quiet, preliminary and wholly secret discussions? I think discussions could even begin without awaiting the outcome of military operations. We believe that the conditions for useful contacts among Vietnamese themselves are ripening so as to permit, in the near future, a preliminary exploration of views without prejudice to the interests of either side.

4. We stand ready to undertake this type of discussion at any time and in any place which you consider appropriate. We would designate our most trusted advisors to meet with such representatives as you may propose.

5. We would be prepared to receive any counter-suggestions from the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam and to give them most serious consideration. *End Text.*

Rusk

³ Eisaku Sato, Japanese Prime Minister.

⁴ On November 18 Thieu asked the Japanese Ambassador to Vietnam to take the request to Sato, despite the Japanese Ambassador's concerns that the letter would be rejected by the North Vietnamese. By this time, press reports came out in Saigon purporting Japanese acceptance of an intermediary role. (Telegram 73250 to Rawalpindi/Togov 2, which repeated telegram 11668 from Saigon, November 22; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, S-AH Files: Lot 84 D 161, Govto Messages, Governor Harriman's Trip, November 1967)

403. Memorandum From Secretary of State Rusk to President Johnson¹

Washington, November 20, 1967.

Mr. President:

Here is a digest of my personal reactions to Secretary McNamara's memorandum to you of November 1 on Vietnam.² I have not discussed his memorandum with anyone in the Department of State and have not attempted, in this digest, a full argumentation. The organization of my comments follows the topical headings of Secretary McNamara's memorandum.

I. Outlook if Present Course of Action is Continued

1. *Expansion of Forces*

I accept, as realistic, the prospect that U.S. forces will reach 525,000, other free world forces will reach 59–75,000, and that South Vietnamese forces can be increased by 60,000.

I do not agree that these increased forces cannot bring "the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces visibly closer to collapse during the next 15 months." The indicators point in the other direction. Ambassador Bunker is convinced that progress "will accelerate."

2. *U.S. Ground Operations in South*

I have no real disagreement on this point. For reasons expressed later, I strongly oppose U.S. ground operations against North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. I would favor increased operations against infiltration routes through Laos, but not with U.S. combat units of significant size.

3. *Bombing Operations in the North*

I believe we must resist pressures to take direct action against foreign shipping entering Haiphong or to bomb irrigation dikes.

I strongly support intensive bombardment of infiltration routes in North Vietnam and Laos and sectors of the battlefield such as the DMZ and areas north of the DMZ.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Walt Rostow, Vietnam, Conduct of War. Top Secret; Sensitive. Another copy is *ibid.*, Country File, Vietnam, March 19, 1970 Memo to the President.

² Document 375.

As for bombing in the Hanoi–Haiphong area, I believe that we should be guided by the following:

(a) we should bomb sufficiently to hold in place the AA defenses of the area;

(b) we should bomb sufficiently to require substantial diversions of manpower to repairs and to maintaining communications;

(c) we should not permit a complete sanctuary in the northern part of North Vietnam and thereby eliminate this incentive for peace.

But, I believe that we should hit only major targets in the Hanoi–Haiphong area and not sustain losses in men and planes for targets of marginal utility from a military point of view.

I would reject the political judgment that a continuous escalation of the bombing will break the will of Hanoi.

In sum, I would be more selective about the targets in the Hanoi–Haiphong area—limiting them to targets which have a significant military value and which are worth the losses incurred.

4. *Pacification*

I generally concur.

5. *Political Evolution*

Ambassador Bunker and I are somewhat more optimistic about political developments. There seems to be little threat of a coup; groups like the extreme Buddhists are not catching on. High priority tasks for the next six months are agreed and promising. Hanoi is being deprived of the possibility of a political collapse in the South.

6. *Probable Results of Present Course of Action*

I am more optimistic than Secretary McNamara about whether progress will be “visible to the general public in the months ahead.” General Westmoreland’s estimate that only 60% of enemy battalions are combat effective is significant. Success is cumulative—and so is failure. The enemy has problems which are growing. *Ambassador Bunker and General Westmoreland should be closely questioned on this point.*

II. Possible Alternative Courses of Action

I agree strongly with Secretary McNamara that we should not extend ground operations into North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia and should not go after foreign shipping, irrigation dikes or civilian centers.

There are large forces in North Vietnam which have not been committed to South Vietnam. If we cannot deal satisfactorily with forces now in South Vietnam, I do not see how we could improve the position by taking on more than 300,000 additional forces in North Vietnam.

No one knows just where the “flash point” is which would change the present rules insofar as Peking and Moscow are concerned. There is a very high risk that ground action against North Vietnam would cross the “flash point.”

(a) Complete Cessation of Bombing in the North

Purely from a political point of view *in relation to Hanoi*, we have two major cards to play: (i) growing success in the South and (ii) the bombing of the North. It seems to me that a *cessation* of the bombing of the North should be related to what will happen next. The Kissinger exercise did not even produce a discussion as to what your San Antonio formula means. They have never said that cessation will lead to talks. They resolutely resist any discussion of reciprocal military action or what we mean by “taking no military advantage.” I do not believe that we should cease the bombing before further probing on what the result would be. If Hanoi has any serious interest in peace, private contacts could move much further and much faster than has occurred to date.

I am sceptical of an extended pause in the bombing because I don’t know who would be persuaded. Hanoi would call any pause (i.e., not permanent) an ultimatum. We know of their “fight and negotiate” strategy discussions. For those in the outside world pressing for a halt in the bombing, no pause would be long enough. No one has said to me that his view would be changed if we had a prolonged pause in the bombing and there were no response from Hanoi.

I do think we should take the drama out of our bombing of the North by cutting back on our operations in the Hanoi–Haiphong area. Politically, we should avoid the impression of continuous escalation; militarily we should weigh military advantage against military losses.

(b) Stabilization of Our Military Effort

I generally agree with the concept of stabilization—but *I would not announce it*. To do so would give the enemy a firm base upon which to plan and redispense his manpower and other assets. Over time, stabilization would become apparent to our own people, without giving guarantees to the other side.

III. Recommendations

1. I would stabilize, but not announce it. This is on the assumption that actual results in the South will continue to accelerate.

2. I would use the bombing of the North as a central card to play in connection with some interest on the part of Hanoi in a peaceful settlement. I would take some of the drama, and the losses, out of our present bombing effort in the Hanoi–Haiphong area. I would be pre-

pared to build upon cease fires at Christmas, New Year's and Tet if the enemy shows any interest.

3. I agree with Secretary McNamara's recommendation.

Dean Rusk

404. Information Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, November 20, 1967.

Mr. President:

I could not get Westmoreland and Bunker together because of Bunker's schedule today, but I had a good lunch in my office with Westy and put to him the key propositions in Bob McNamara's memorandum.²

1. *A bombing stand down in North Viet Nam except in the tactical area across the DMZ if they continue to press at the DMZ.* He was against such a policy.³ Effective bombing operations against the logistical system requires pressure throughout that system, from the Chinese Communist border all the way south. He wants to keep the northeast railway lines cut or harassed; he wants to continue complicated shipments out of Haiphong to Hanoi and south. He wants to keep destroying the temporary bridges which they put in.

When I pressed him on the question of Hanoi-Haiphong area, he said: bombing south of the 20th parallel is "absolutely essential." He

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Walt Rostow, Vietnam, Conduct of War. Secret. The notation "ps" on the memorandum indicates that the President saw it. Another copy is *ibid.*, McNamara, Robert S.—Southeast Asia.

² Document 375. According to a November 22 record of the meeting by Westmoreland, the General told Rostow that the new troop level should not be announced "because more may be needed and we cannot pass judgment until we assess the situation after receiving the 525,000." (U.S. Army Military History Institute, William C. Westmoreland Papers, History File 25—Nov. 13 to 28, 1967) The President dined with Westmoreland that evening. (Johnson Library, President's Daily Diary)

³ According to a memorandum from Army Vice Chief of Staff General Ralph Haines to Army Chief of Staff General Harold K. Johnson, dated November 20, the JCS opposed any stand-down but would accept Christmas, New Year's, and Tet truces for 24, 24, and 48 hours respectively at a maximum. (U.S. Army Military History Institute, Army Chiefs of Staff Collection, TS 0027–82 thru TS 0031–78) The impetus for the truces arose from the NLF's proclamation on November 18 that it would enact 3-day truces during Christmas and New Year's and a 7-day truce during Tet 1968. See *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1967, p. 1032.

would prefer to see bombing continued all the way to the Chinese Communist border.

2. *Announce that our present U.S. troop ceilings are the limit of our commitment.* He said that in one sense the issue is academic because they will not all be there for a year; although he is satisfied that the present troop shipment schedule is as tight as it can be. On television he said he would pass judgment on the adequacy of the troop level at the time when the 525,000 are in place. He believes it would be "foolish" to announce now that 525,000 is our limit, although obviously we hope that it will prove to be the maximum requirement.

3. *Forego ground operations in North Vietnam; Laos; and Cambodia.* With respect to North Vietnam, he would like for us to have the capability to raid North Vietnam in force above the DMZ in May–June of next year—the earliest time that might be technically possible. He is not now recommending such an operation; but he thinks it important that we have such an option if our DMZ position requires it at that time.

With respect to Laos, he has been discussing with Bob McNamara some very limited operations by South Vietnamese forces, which would get at certain critical base areas now being used in Laos to support operations against us in the highlands. In addition, there is an area in southeast Laos which is used as a rocket storage base which he would like to get at come next March, again with South Vietnamese troops. These would be raid operations designed to make the enemy uncertain of his sanctuary. Therefore, although a formal recommendation has not yet come to us from him, he would not like us flatly to rule out the possibility of some limited raiding operations in Laos.

With respect to Cambodia, he is sensitive, of course, to the political problem. He believes there are "dozens, even hundreds" of VC bases of the kind just discovered by the press inside Cambodia. Again, he is not now recommending any Cambodian operations but he does not wish to see them flatly ruled out.

4. *No mining of Haiphong.* He thinks we ought to make a maximum effort to throttle the flow of supplies from Haiphong into the country, but believes our present efforts to harass and isolate Haiphong are quite effective; and he understands well that they involve less risk than mining or attacking Soviet ships. Therefore, he is not recommending an attack on Haiphong harbor.

5. *No attack on dikes.* He is not at all sure the Air Force has a realistic capability for destroying the dikes; and the effort to destroy them would raise tremendous political problems. He does not recommend, therefore, an attack on the dikes.

6. *Maintain progress with lesser U.S. casualties and destruction inside South Vietnam.* Westy's reply to this point was, simply, that is his "constant endeavor." Every operation is undertaken with a view to mini-

mizing our own and South Vietnamese civil casualties. On the other hand, he cannot permit his tactical operations to be controlled by these criteria. In this context, he noted that certain technical devices now coming into use would tend to make our bombing attacks in South Vietnam more accurate and otherwise help to limit casualties.

7. *Transfer functions to the ARVN.* Over the next two years this is Westy's central purpose. Elements in a program have been studied; but a mature operational program to transfer functions does not yet exist. One reason for his statements in the U.S. about the ARVN and the U.S. phase down within two years is to give him leverage, when he goes back, to both elevate the South Vietnamese—by recalling the confidence he showed in them in the U.S.—and to pressure them in the direction of better performance and more responsibility. He is extremely conscious that one of our tasks is not merely to achieve our immediate purpose in Vietnam but to leave behind a military establishment capable of looking after itself increasingly.

With respect to Bob McNamara's two central propositions, then:

—Westy is against a new announced program of stabilization, although he does not now envisage more U.S. troops and actively wishes to see the ARVN take over more functions;

—He is flatly against a bombing stand down for reasons set out in paragraph 1, above.

Walt

405. Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (Bundy) to Secretary of State Rusk¹

Washington, undated.

SUBJECT

Next Moves on the Buttercup Matter

You have seen the cables that Thieu and Loan are both resisting the release of the original courier (Sau Ha) and the small fry captured around him. They are taking the position that we should send the messenger back saying that we would release them only if the NLF actually released two Americans. They also wish to state that any prisoners released by the GVN should be free to determine whether they go back to the NLF.

We believe Thieu can hardly be budged short of a Presidential message, and that this now requires serious consideration. We attach a draft which sticks wholly to the prisoner issue, with only an added oral assurance that we do not propose to pursue the broader political aspects until we see much more about the channel.² As the messages read, the GVN leaders are arguing that a hard reply need only involve two weeks of delay. This suggests that they might be willing to yield in the end. But equally it would be our judgment that a hard reply runs a very substantial chance of breaking off the whole channel, and all that might flow from it.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–7 VIET S/BUTTERCUP. Top Secret; Buttercup. In an attached note to Rusk, November 20, Bundy wrote: “We have reviewed the attached memorandum with Ambassador Bunker, who feels that it would be much better for him to take the next move on his return. Mr. Habib and I agree with this judgment. Nick concurs. The Ambassador generally concurs with the line of argument shown in the attached Presidential letter, so that it may still be useful for you to discuss this line of argument briefly with the President in any event. If the President approves having Ambassador Bunker handle this, the immediate action would be a short message for Locke to convey to Thieu that the Ambassador will wish to discuss this on his return and after having discussed it with the President.”

² The draft letter from Johnson to Thieu, not printed, was to be used by Locke if approved. It cautioned Thieu that “failure on our part to release the man Sau Ha and those arrested with him would very likely mean a breaking off of a channel that could have major importance in the exchange of prisoners.” The President also expressed concern about the NLF making the contact public and about the fact that others in the NLF would be “less disposed” to make similar moves in the future. Locke was to add orally that although the President recognized that Thieu would deal with the broader political aspects of the contact, there remained a necessity to move on the immediate prisoner exchange. A shorter draft letter echoing the same line was also attached to the memorandum.

The alternative to a letter might be to have Ambassador Bunker handle the matter when he gets back. This would mean a delay of roughly a week, but has the advantage that it could be done in lower key, with a less total commitment of US prestige than a Presidential letter would involve, and with the Ambassador's capacity for gentle persuasion. The substance of the arguments would be the same in either case.

WP Bundy

406. Telegram From the Deputy Ambassador to Vietnam (Locke) to the President's Special Assistant (Rostow), Secretary of State Rusk, Secretary of Defense McNamara, and Director of Central Intelligence Helms¹

Saigon, November 20, 1967, 1525Z.

CAS 780. 1. In my meeting with President Thieu the afternoon of 20 November, I reviewed the general progress of the Buttercup case and made the following points:

A. That the GVN and USG are agreed on the general objectives to be pursued in this case and that actions taken thus far have been pointed toward that objective.

B. Described our theory that the NLF will not likely react favorably toward getting a dialogue going and a prisoner exchange started unless our side meets the basic requests contained in Buttercup/1's last message to us, specifically the release of Sau Ha et al, better treatment for prisoners now held in GVN custody and guaranteeing Sau Ha's security in his travel back to the NLF headquarters area. In fact, Buttercup/2 was told he would be considered a "spy" by Buttercup/1 if he were to return to the NLF without Sau Ha, and of course no further progress would be made.

C. Therefore, we felt it desirable to move ahead with the release of Sau Ha et al particularly since they are "not important" prisoners in any case.

D. I noted Vien's and Loan's concern over what would happen to GVN police morale if the prisoners were simply released without guarantee of NLF reciprocity, and suggested that Loan's idea of turning the prisoners over to the CIO for a "counterintelligence operation" might solve the problem of Loan's concern about police morale, etc.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–7 VIET S/BUTTERCUP. Secret; Immediate; Nodis; Buttercup; Exclusive; Via CAS Channels.

E. Also mentioned Vietnamese concern over the United States dealing with the NLF, particularly if this were to become publicly known. Remarked that it is not a recognition of the NLF that is involved, but a simple prisoner exchange of benefit to both us and GVN, and that VC and GVN had previously released prisoners.

2. Thieu made the same points he has previously offered to the effect (A) that he agrees with the principle of prisoner exchange, (B) that he feels generally that there should be some guarantee of a reciprocal exchange of prisoners by the NLF, and (C) has authorized his representative Minister Vien to work out the procedural details.² Thieu stated that it is widely known that Sau Ha is now in prison and if he and the others were to be released without a specific guarantee of prisoners being released in exchange by the NLF it would be difficult to explain to his critics who might choose to propagandize the situation. Thieu commented that a prisoner exchange is "understandable" but that a unilateral step by the GVN for the release of Sau Ha et al without guarantee from the NLF is a much more difficult action to explain. He also commented that the GVN has recently shown additional good faith in not having executed the three Viet Cong scheduled before the firing squad on 17 November.

3. I made the point that if he fails to pursue the Buttercup case along the lines suggested in Buttercup/1's last message to us the NLF could still publicize its message to us, in which they speak of a prisoner exchange and discussions leading to broader matters, and claim that the U.S. Government has not responded to this message and that despite its statements about sincerely seeking peace in Vietnam has not taken the minor steps suggested by the NLF to get the ball rolling. The NLF could also claim that both the U.S. Government and the GVN are not even interested in working toward the release of their own prisoners now held by the NLF. I underlined the serious political repercussions this kind of a propaganda statement by the NLF could have in the United States where President Johnson is already having difficulties with the "peace" groups which would take maximum advantage of his having reportedly turned down such an offer from the NLF. I indicated that publicity of the negotiations with our lack of responsiveness now could be much more damaging and more difficult to explain than publicity after we had shown responsiveness.

4. I commented that if we do pursue the Buttercup case along the lines we are recommending and if there were to be a leak somewhere along the line or if the NLF should choose to propagandize it for their own purposes, we could claim correctly that the Buttercup case began

² According to telegram CAS 779 from Saigon, November 20, Thieu had already come to this conclusion by November 18. (Ibid.)

at NLF initiative in sending the first message to our side. We could also show that the U.S. Government and the GVN are in complete accord in working out a prisoner exchange with the GVN obviously cooperating to the point of releasing the prisoners now held by the Vietnamese police. I also recalled our proposal that the prisoners be released by the GVN under the amnesty for political prisoners which it had granted at the outset of the new government. I commented that the three American prisoners recently released in Phnom Penh could also be considered as a gesture of good faith on the part of the NLF to which we have responded by a similar gesture, which is in keeping with reciprocal gestures (prisoner exchange) in the past.³

5. The one point that clearly emerges from my conversation with Thieu is that he has never agreed to our specific proposal on the release of Sau Ha et al as the next step in the Buttercup case. He does agree and continues to agree "in principle" that an exchange of prisoners is a desirable objective and that we should work toward that end. It is not clear at this point who originated the hard line position expressed by Vien and Loan of a "guarantee" from the NLF in the form of a concrete act by the NLF to release prisoners from their side before we release Sau Ha. Neither is it clear how far Thieu may be willing to depart from this view as a result of our urging. Thieu plans to discuss the matter again with Minister Vien and to contact me for another discussion after he has done so.

³ In Phnom Penh, Cambodia, on November 11, the NLF released to the custody of antiwar activist Thomas Hayden three American prisoners, all of whom were U.S. Army sergeants. The group returned to the United States on November 13. Telegram 71461 to Saigon, November 18, contained a joint State/Defense message requesting that the Embassy attempt to get the GVN to release three VC prisoners as a reciprocal gesture. (Ibid., POL 27–7 VIET) The Embassy did manage to get the GVN to postpone a scheduled execution of three VC cadre held as prisoners. In telegram 71460 to Saigon, November 18, the Department directed that in light of the DRV's threat to place on trial three American prisoners if such executions occurred, the Embassy needed to "confirm with GVN clear understanding that any executions of VC will be subject to full prior consultation with USG." (Ibid., POL 27 VIET S)

407. Telegram From the Embassy in France to the Department of State¹

Paris, November 20, 1967, 1055Z.

6778. 1. After complete silence of several months, Ray² telephoned EmbOff (Dean) Nov 18 at home and asked to see him indicating through code words which were used in 1966 that purpose of meeting was to discuss his contact with NLF. At Nov 19 meeting, Ray said that on basis impressions gathered recently in Vietnamese circles Paris which have access to North Vietnamese and NLF authorities, he thinks Hanoi and NLF may possibly be more interested now in negotiated settlement than they were 4 or 5 months ago despite intransigent public position. However, before testing this sentiment, Ray would like to have reply to following question which he read from prepared paper: "Within framework of private and secret diplomacy whose goal is to bring peace to Vietnam, is USG ready to: (1) Take a peace initiative by confirming through an intermediary of Ray its willingness to send a qualified representative to meet (A) a qualified rep of GDRV and (B) a qualified rep of NLF? (2) If these meetings give rise to 'a hope,' would US accompany this desire for peace by concrete acts which would be well received by Vietnamese people such as, for example, extending holiday truce at end of year or extending Tet truce?"

2. In off-the-cuff reply, EmbOff emphasized Secretary Rusk's complete sincerity when he mentions publicly again and again his willingness to meet with DRV reps anywhere and anytime but that it has been latter which has constantly refused to accept offer to talk with USG—in secret or publicly. Therefore EmbOff said he thought US remained willing send qualified rep to meet with GDRV. As for meeting with NLF rep, EmbOff said this would not raise insurmountable problem if NLF really wants to talk with official US reps. EmbOff said he could not comment on second half of Ray's question and even answer to first half of question represented EmbOff's personal views and not necessarily those of USG. Furthermore, EmbOff added he did not know whether USG wanted to use this channel of communication with adversary. EmbOff promised transmit question to Dept and agreed inform Ray when reply received.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Elmtree. Top Secret; Elmtree; Nodis. Received at 7:18 a.m. The Elmtree contact of 1966 involved efforts to secure contact with the NLF through former South Vietnamese Premier Nguyen Khanh. Khanh alleged that he could get the NLF to release some American prisoners of war in order to validate his status. See *Foreign Relations*, 1964–1968, vol. IV, Document 179.

² Khanh used the code-name "Ray" during the Elmtree contacts.

3. Ray said that if Dept's reply is affirmative to first point—i.e., USG ready to meet with GDRV and NLF reps—and is agreeable in principle to second point—i.e., prolonging truce if previous discussions turn out to be useful—Ray would in second meeting with EmbOff give some details of how he plans to get word to GDRV and NLF through trusted intermediary. He thinks he could have authoritative reply within 2 to 3 weeks after obtaining green light from us whether on these terms Hanoi and NLF would be interested entering into secret discussions with USG. He wanted however not to be overly optimistic because even if US agreed to his taking soundings on Hanoi's or NLF's receptivity to talking secretly with USG rep, "nothing at this time guarantees success of his undertaking." When asked what makes Ray think that there may be some slight chance that he might be successful where others have failed, he replied that perhaps a well-connected South Vietnamese living outside own country may be in better position to be heard in Hanoi or by Front than a foreigner or Vietnamese official associated with GVN in Saigon. He also said that a possible willingness by Hanoi or NLF to talk secretly with USG should not be interpreted as a sign of their weakness or imminent collapse but rather as testing sincerity of US public statements.

4. In conclusion Ray suggested that in replying to his question, Dept may also wish to solicit views of Ambassador Alexis Johnson³ who knows him well and was associated with Ray's efforts to enter into contact with NLF during 1966.

5. Ray and EmbOff agreed that regardless of Dept's reply, complete secrecy would be preserved in this operation as had been the case in our dealings with him in the past.⁴

Wallner

³ U. Alexis Johnson, Ambassador to Japan and former Deputy Ambassador to Vietnam.

⁴ In light of DRV and NLF intransigence and NVA/VC attacks near Dak To, Dean was instructed not to give any specific advance assurances as Khanh wanted. (Telegram 73700 to Paris, November 23; Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Elmtree) As reported in telegram 7072 from Paris, November 27, Dean told Khanh that he could undertake an exploration of views with the NLF "strictly on his own account and in no way on behalf of anybody else, including USG." Khanh agreed to report back in 2 weeks the results of his overture. (Ibid.) Khanh never followed up on his promise to inform Dean of the results of his "soundings." (Telegram 23868 from Paris, February 14, 1969; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET)

408. Paper Prepared by the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (Bundy)¹

Washington, November 20, 1967.

JCS Recommendations, with OSD positions, and recommended State position:

1. Remove restrictions on all militarily significant targets in NVN.

OSD—No

State—No

2. Mine NVN deep water ports.

OSD—No

State—No

3. Mine inland waterways and estuaries in NVN north of 20°N.

OSD—Yes, with prohibition against mining within 5 miles of any deep water ports and within 25 miles of Chinese border.

State—Yes

4. Extend naval surface operations (Sea Dragon).²

OSD—Yes

State—Yes, but with careful restrictions.

5. Use US SAMs (TALOS)³ from ships against combat aircraft.

OSD—Yes

State—No

6. Increase air interdiction in Laos and along NVN borders.

OSD—No (since present arrangements with RLG are adequate)

State—No

Sullivan—believes more should be done, especially during the next two months, but under present arrangements with RLG. Notes that Souvanna would favor such an increase.

7. Eliminate operational restrictions on B-52s with regard to Laos.

OSD—Yes

State—check with Sullivan

Sullivan—Yes on night-time overflights, selected daylight bombing subject to clearance, and limited penetrations subject to clearance; No on blanket bombing authority or “indiscriminate” day-time overflights.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Bundy Files: Lot 85 D 240, Top Secret WPB Chron., Nov.–Dec. 1967. Top Secret.

² Operations along the North Vietnamese coast up to the 20th parallel.

³ A specific type of surface-to-air missile.

8. Expand operations in Laos (Prairie Fire).⁴

OSD—Yes “Examine sympathetically,” have MACV and Sullivan coordinate on a selective basis.

State—Have MACV and Sullivan work out, subject to final approval here.

Sullivan—prepared to work with MACV, but wishes to retain final Washington approval; indicates clearly negative attitude on battalion- or company-size operations. No to the Gung-Ho warriors; and keep Washington involved as restraint.

9. Expand operations in Cambodia (Daniel Boone).⁵

OSD—No.

State—No, at least for the present, but could be subject to review depending on Sihanouk behavior.

10. Expand and reorient NVN covert programs (Footboy).⁶

OSD—Yes (as means of getting more intelligence)

State—Yes in principle, but need more information to be sure proposals do not raise political problems.

⁴ Guerrilla and reconnaissance operations in the part of Laos closest to the border with Vietnam.

⁵ Clandestine ground reconnaissance into an area in Cambodia within 20 kilometers of the South Vietnamese border.

⁶ The overall program of clandestine operations against North Vietnam; formerly known as Operations Plan 34-Alpha.

409. Notes of Meeting¹

Washington, November 21, 1967.

NOVEMBER 21 MEETING WITH SAIGON ADVISERS

The President opened the meeting by saying that he wanted periodic coordinated reports by Ambassador Bunker and the South Vietnamese leadership.

Ambassador Bunker said he had discussed a “Report to the Nation.” He said there is a need for more non-military views.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Tom Johnson’s Notes of Meetings. Top Secret. Those present at the meeting, which was held 8:30–10:30 a.m., were: the President, the Vice President, Rusk, McNamara, Bunker, Komer, Wheeler, Westmoreland, Helms, Rostow, Christian, and Tom Johnson. (Ibid., President’s Daily Diary)

The President showed the group a *Christian Science Monitor* article on the views of various dissenting Senators about Vietnam. "This is the type of thing which the American people are seeing every day. We need to get them more information of a factual nature."

Secretary Rusk said that Governor Romney² is going to Saigon. The Secretary said he had a good meeting with Romney, urging him to visit the South Vietnamese units.

The President said it was his judgment that Richard Nixon would capture the nomination.

The President asked if State and Defense had done all they could to get the additional troops from other allied countries—and also to get to Vietnam the additional troops from the U.S. which already had been approved in line with General Westmoreland's earlier request. "The clock is ticking." We need to get all the additional troops as fast as we can.

Secretary Rusk asked how much of the support for the Korean troops are we providing.

General Westmoreland said we provide most of the support for the Korean troops out of main supply depots.

Secretary McNamara said we should ask the Koreans for combat troops not support troops.

The President said we need somebody like Ambassador Harriman to sit down with the Koreans to talk about their additional troops.

Secretary McNamara said we need a B52 authorization from the Thais.³

Secretary Rusk said that the Thais were nervous about the number of U.S. troops in their country.

The President asked Ambassador Bunker and General Westmoreland to find the best way to put the best troops in the best shape we can as quickly as possible. The President said that we should let it be known in the United States if indeed the South Vietnamese troops are as good as General Westmoreland and Ambassador Bunker have been saying they are.

General Westmoreland said he is assigning a U. S. Information Officer to each ARVN Commander to help improve the relations of the South Vietnamese troops with the American press.

The President asked about any additional needs in the pacification area.

² Michigan Governor George Romney was considering a run for the Republican Presidential nomination in 1968.

³ These bombers were to be based at U Tapao and were to be used in the Arc Light campaign.

Secretary McNamara said he would provide 500 additional officers for pacification work by February.

Bob Komer said he was for 3551 officers.

Secretary McNamara said the military is short of this type of man. He said there are officers in Vietnam who can be used in the pacification program, and the military will train the remaining 2600.

Secretary Rusk asked if any military reservists could be brought back to active duty to fill this need.

Secretary McNamara said no. He said, "These are fighting advisers" rather than officers who are involved in non-combat responsibilities.

Bob Komer said he has confidence that General Westmoreland's staff would assist in providing pacification personnel. General Wheeler said that these men were mostly Army and Marine Captains.

Secretary McNamara said you cannot get these officers any faster by calling up reserve personnel. Secretary McNamara said that \$60 million have been requested for additional roads. He said he was not sure how this amount would be raised, but that it would be arranged.⁴

The President stressed the need to bring the South Vietnamese government to the center of the stage stressing tax needs, anti-corruption measures and a need for a reform image.

Bob Komer asked if the President would permit the Saigon aides to tell the South Vietnamese that these were the President's personal views in order to expedite action on these recommendations. The President approved this.

The President said a great deal of the ammunition for dissent in this country was a product of the Saigon press corps. He asked the status of Barry Zorthian.

Secretary Rusk said the State Department was working on that now.

The President said the main front of the war is here in the United States, and asked about the status of Buttercup.

⁴ In a November 20 memorandum to McNamara, Komer, in addition to listing all of the major urgent pacification needs, fixed the requirement for roads and waterways at \$27 million in military funds and \$35 million from DOD/AID realignment funds for the next year. (Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OSD Files: FRC 72 A 2468, Viet 380 Pacification) According to a memorandum from Leonhart to Rostow, November 8, a high-level meeting to address issues relating to the requirements and implementation of the ICEX program was scheduled for November 9. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 1 C (2)) Notes of this meeting have not been found. After this meeting, an interagency special working group under White House chairmanship was formed to accelerate the anti-infrastructure programs. (Telegram 67987 to Saigon, November 10; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S)

Secretary Rusk said the South Vietnamese government is not too anxious to proceed on this matter.

CIA Director Helms said that the position of the South Vietnamese is that the Viet Cong ought to release somebody before the South Vietnamese government does.

The President asked if there is much hope that Buttercup will lead to something else.

CIA Director Helms said no. Helms said it could lead to additional prisoners being exchanged, but he doubted any negotiations would result.

The President asked if there is anything else that the United States government should be doing to bring about peace.

Ambassador Bunker said that we have tried everything. The more efforts we make now, the more Ho believes we want to get out.

General Westmoreland said that he believes that Ho interprets our efforts as a sign of weakness.

Secretary McNamara said we should push our view on the South Vietnamese to get them moving Buttercup.

Ambassador Bunker said that these things take time, that we cannot rush it. The Viet Cong are their enemy we must remember.

The President asked Walt Rostow to assemble the data on four or five peace efforts we have initiated. "I don't expect to do any more talking until I hear from them. There has been enough talk on this." The President asked that a speech be written which would outline the failure of the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese to respond to any of our peace initiatives.

Ambassador Bunker said that the San Antonio speech was most forthcoming. "I do not see how we could have gone any further in our offer."

Walt Rostow said Buttercup is the most promising way if we are serious. The key for Buttercup is the establishment of confidence with Thieu about this type of dialogue.

The President said there are four areas for immediate attention. The first is the expediting of additional troops to Vietnam. The second is the equipping of the South Vietnamese army with the best equipment. Secretary McNamara said the Joint Chiefs of Staff are working on this presently.

The third area was the placement of B52's in Thailand. Secretary Rusk said he would discuss this with Ambassador Unger. The United States wants to place 25 rather than 50 B52's in Thailand.

The fourth area is the need for additional road money. Secretary McNamara said he would try to get this.

The President asked what would United States policy be on the proposal of pauses over the holidays. He pointed out that the Viet Cong had added to the number of days.

Secretary Rusk said that the government should announce an offer to meet Hanoi about extending the truce. As before, he does not expect that they will meet with us.

General Wheeler said that the U. S. troops have rules of engagement which will protect our troops. He pointed out that last Tet North Vietnam moved 23,000 tons of supplies just north of the DMZ.

General Wheeler said we must assume they will do everything possible to take maximum advantage of these pauses.

The President said, "We should announce what we are going to do and then let them have it" if they violate the truce. "We have been too tolerant of these people."

Bob Komer asked about the possibility of a reciprocal military standdown.

General Wheeler said we cannot do it.

The President said we make an agreement and stand by it. They make an agreement and break it.

The President asked why we are so silent about the Cambodian situation, particularly in light of recent press reports about base camps along the Cambodian border.

Secretary Rusk said that Prince Sihanouk has invited 20 newsmen to visit Cambodia and is also writing the United Nations on this matter. The Secretary said this will provide us a good opportunity to invite the United Nations to act on this matter of Cambodia being used as a sanctuary for North Vietnamese troops.

The President said he was tired of Sihanouk's actions.

Secretary McNamara said we need to surface more information about Cambodia.

General Westmoreland explained that his men had tipped off the two United States newsmen about the location of the camp which had been discussed in the press this morning. "This is the one thing on which we can get cooperation from the Saigon press."

The President said we should get Ambassador Goldberg to deliver some speeches on this.

The President asked about recommendations for operations inside Laos.

General Westmoreland said he was anxious to initiate action in base area 607. He pointed out that the missiles that hit Da Nang came through this base area. He said this action would require two Vietnamese battalions and a raid of three to four days.

Ambassador Bunker said he was anxious to see this act taken. "80% of their supplies come through Laos. To give them a free hand is suicidal."

General Wheeler said over the past 12–18 months the enemy has built a truck road through this area. He said the Joint Chiefs of Staff agree that within the next 60 to 90 days General Westmoreland should be authorized to initiate action in this area.

The President asked about the increase in the number of planes lost. "I am beginning to agree with Bob McNamara that it does not appear the targets are worth the loss in planes."

General Wheeler explained that the North Vietnamese have changed their tactics. They are firing SAMs in a barrage pattern. In addition the MIGs have developed new tactics. He said the United States forces are going to have to vary the pattern of attack.

The President emphasized "the clock is ticking." Get the targets you have to hit. The bombing arouses so much opposition in this country.

General Wheeler said that we lost 25 aircraft this month compared with 42 in May.

Secretary McNamara said it was his opinion that the raids were not worth the losses in aircraft. He pointed out that five aircraft were lost against Phu Yen.

Secretary [Rusk?] asked about a possible increase in the number of sorties being used in close support of ground troops.

General Westmoreland said it was no problem on this since B52's were used for mass bombing and he has pre-emptive authority over tactical air missions. "The B52's have done a fantastic job."

The President asked about the reports of large scale civilian casualties.

Secretary McNamara said we have killed a lot of civilians, but not as many as the enemy claims.

General Westmoreland said, "We have killed fewer civilians in this war than in any previous war in which America has been involved."

The President said there is a need to remove the emphasis on statistics in battle casualties.⁵

⁵ This discussion was prompted by an undated CIA analysis of VC casualty data that Johnson requested from Helms. The paper described methods used to compile casualty figures and concluded that despite risks of "inflationary" reporting, enemy casualties were actually being underestimated. This report was sent under cover of a November 22 memorandum from Helms to McNamara. (Washington National Records Center, RG 330, McNamara Vietnam Files: FRC 77-0075, Vietnam–November and December 1967)

Ambassador Bunker pointed out we report not only men killed in action and hospital cases, but casualties of a non-authorized nature. In contrast the North Vietnamese report only the ones who are hospitalized.

The President asked why do we continue to release these statistics, especially since they make it appear that U.S. troops are suffering more casualties than South Vietnamese troops.

General Westmoreland said we report these figures because the pattern was established, and because "we would catch hell from the press if we were to change the system."

The President said just because we have been doing something wrong for several years doesn't mean we can't correct our error.

Secretary McNamara said he dared not stop reporting these casualties because of the fear of a tremendous press attack.

General Westmoreland says he has the system of reporting under examination by his staff.

Ambassador Bunker said it would be good to bring out a comparison of the Vietnamese casualties which more accurately reflect the situation.

Secretary McNamara said it was a fact that our regular Army losses are higher than the South Vietnamese regular army losses, "but if you include popular and regional losses, their losses are higher than ours."

The American press believes that we are lying on any body counts.

General Westmoreland said that survey details have found that the United States counts of enemy dead are reasonable and the reporting system is "if anything, conservative."

General Westmoreland says he has hard evidence that the enemy KIA is larger than reported, since there is no way of determining how many die from artillery and aerial bombardment. "I have told the American press that I will investigate any incident in which they believe our counts are bad."

General Westmoreland said he was very skeptical of any proposal to eliminate or change the method of casualty reporting since this is not a live issue in Saigon now. We have more to lose than to gain by changing the system.

General Wheeler said that we are at an obvious disadvantage in that we cannot stop reporting our figures. If we were to stop we would have many charges that the war is being lost rather than the current accusation that there is a stalemate.

General Westmoreland said we cannot help that our casualties are reported since there are reporters with most of the large units in Vietnam. It would be a matter of our casualties being reported and the enemy casualties not being reported. I believe the press in Saigon are rea-

sonably satisfied that we are trying to give an accurate record of casualties.

The President said that the press in this country does not believe this. They believe we are lying to them about these figures.

Ambassador Bunker agreed with the President.

Secretary McNamara said he believed that the press in this country was skeptical of the figures but that he agreed with General Westmoreland that we should not change the method of reporting.

General Westmoreland said the answer to this is to convince the press that the counts are reasonably accurate.⁶

The President suggested that General Westmoreland appoint a four or five member committee of correspondents to investigate the system of body counts.

Secretary McNamara agreed with this recommendation indicating that it would strengthen our credibility with the press and the American public.

The President said no matter what others may believe, this is an issue in this country and we need a committee to investigate this.

General Westmoreland said that he has such a program to get reporters on teams to count bodies themselves. "We are on the right track on this."

General Wheeler said the best evidence of our figures come from the other side in the form of captured documents.

The President then asked plans for departure by Ambassador Bunker, Ambassador Komer and General Westmoreland.

General Westmoreland said he was leaving on Wednesday,⁷ Ambassador Bunker said he was leaving on Friday. Ambassador Komer said he was leaving with Ambassador Bunker.

General Westmoreland said we should encourage more groups, not less, to visit Vietnam and get a first hand check. He suggested that more preachers, more educators, more Congressmen be invited. The President added to that group, groups of women.

Ambassador Bunker summarized by saying that we have set our priorities for the United States program in Vietnam. He said that President Thieu and Vice President Ky have almost identical priorities which is encouraging.

⁶ In his November 22 memorandum recording this meeting, Westmoreland noted on this point: "I insisted that we continue to report enemy casualties (by body count) and do all possible to convince the press that these reports are valid." (U.S. Army Military History Institute, William C. Westmoreland Papers, History File 25–Nov. 13 to 28, 1967)

⁷ November 22.

The President asked if President Thieu planned to come to the United States.

Ambassador Bunker said yes at a later date when he settles down the government a bit.

Secretary Rusk said he favors President Thieu coming to the United States, but only if he brought Ky with him.

General Westmoreland said he had no fear of any coups taking place, but that if a situation should arise he thought he could handle it.

General Westmoreland summarized by saying that the quantities of men and matériel were fine. The M16's are coming in at a steady clip. There are a few shortages but nothing that cannot be taken care of easily.

Secretary McNamara said that we are going all out to get choppers and that the Colt Company was working around the clock to get M16s.

General Westmoreland said there is no problem with the number of fixed wing aircraft. He said there is a need for more one and a-half ton trucks. He said, "the men and matériel we are getting are all I can reasonably expect. I would have difficulty absorbing troops much faster."

General Westmoreland said that South Vietnamese troops would be equipped with the M16's.

The President said his main concern was that General Westmoreland get what he wants as soon as possible.

General Westmoreland said from a practical standpoint he had all he needed at this stage. Secretary McNamara said General Westmoreland would have 106 battalions—102 by December 31 and the others by April.

General Westmoreland said that 525,000 men will be a well balanced hard-hitting force.

The President said he hopes we will lower the boom to get the extra troops which they have promised.

General Westmoreland said the main problem is one of leadership, and that we must watch closely to strike a balance of quantity and quality among the Vietnam troops.

Komer stressed needs in two areas. The first was a need for an all out priority attached to Viet Cong infrastructure. He said he needed not more than \$10 million for detention centers.

The second is the need for civil and military consolidation. We need more good military people. Komer said he would like Bill Colby, one of Dick Helms' top men, to go to Vietnam to assist in pacification.

The President said for him to get the best people available including Colby if Helms could spare him and Colby wanted to go.

The President said Ambassador Bunker and General Westmoreland should figure out a way to get Thieu to establish better rapport with the American press.

Secretary Rusk expressed his appreciation on behalf of the official Washington family for the excellent leadership being provided by Ambassador Bunker and General Westmoreland.

George Christian pointed out that the refugee problem was a big one. He mentioned that the American press was beginning to place a great deal of emphasis on this problem. Ambassador Komer said we would try to do better on this.

George Christian stressed the need to get a man with known prestige to handle the information duties within Saigon.

The President and Secretary Rusk agreed with Christian.

General Wheeler said he, Ambassador Bunker, General Westmoreland and Bob Komer went to see General Eisenhower at Walter Reed yesterday. "General Eisenhower expressed his strong support for our position."

The President said he wanted General Wheeler to tell General Goodpaster that we want to make available to General Eisenhower everything the President knows.

General Westmoreland asked for approval to take away from AID the responsibility for the war veterans advisory commission and place it under his responsibility. The President approved this action.

410. Information Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, November 21, 1967, 3:50 p.m.

Mr. President:

Late on Monday, November 20, 1967, I had an hour's session alone with Amb. Bunker. I took him through exactly the same questions I

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Walt Rostow, Vietnam, Conduct of War. Secret. The notation "ps" on the memorandum indicates that the President saw it. Another copy is *ibid.*, Country File, Vietnam, March 19, 1970 Memo to the President.

took Westy, derived from Bob McNamara's memorandum.² The results were as follows.

1. *A bombing stand down in North Viet Nam except in the tactical area across the DMZ if they continue to press at the DMZ.* Ellsworth talked speculatively about the problem around these three points:

—He sees no reason to believe that a bombing stand down now would lead to serious negotiations, and he does not think we should trade bombing simply for talk;

—He is, however, interested in the barrier and in Southpaw³ (harassment on the ground in Laos) because he would like to put us in a position where we might put Hanoi to a test in the future with a bombing pause. Therefore, he feels it important that we get as good a grasp as we can on infiltration of Laos so that the costs of a pause designed to test Hanoi would be minimized.

2. *Announce that our present U.S. troop ceilings are the limit of our commitment.* Bunker is rather drawn to this proposition if we make it clear that an announced troop ceiling would assume that no one else would expand the war. He says that we are fighting a limited war for limited objectives and believes that we will not need more than 525,000 U.S. forces. He was not dogmatic on this point but, I would say, mildly favorable.

3. *Forego ground operations in North Vietnam; Laos; and Cambodia.* Bunker would make no statement committing us against such ground operations. His advice: keep them guessing. As for Laos, as indicated above, he actively supports Southpaw.

4. *No mining of Haiphong.* Bunker is against mining the harbors. We are doing almost as well by hitting transport around Haiphong. The international complications are worth avoiding.

5. *No attack on dikes.* Bunker is against the attack on dikes because of the international political repercussions.

6. *Maintain progress with lesser U.S. casualties and destruction inside South Vietnam.* Under this heading Bunker is worried about future operations in the Delta. He is afraid that an additional massive flow of refugees could turn the people of South Vietnam against us. He is skeptical of Komer's view that the refugees are churned up by enemy operations. He believes they are mainly trying to get away from our bombing. It is true that of 2 million refugees generated by the war, 638,000 have already gone back to their villages and another 600,000 have been resettled elsewhere. But he would like to see the total refugee number decline in 1968 and not increase. (I told Bunker that I had raised this

² Document 375.

³ Southpaw was the code name for a plan to conduct U.S. Special Forces-led raids into the Laos panhandle using ARVN forces of 1–3 battalion strength.

question with the President and with Westy, so you would get a feel for it. I urged him to sit down with Westy and make sure that the actual tactical plan Westy proposes to follow in the Delta would not generate excessive refugees, pointing out that Westy himself seemed sensitive on this point as well as on the need not to induce a decline in Delta rice production by his military operations.)

7. *Transfer functions to the ARVN.* Bunker is, of course, all for this; but he says we must go slow and steady. We should not shove at them more than they can absorb at any one time. Like Westy, he regards the build up of the political and military capacity of the South Vietnamese as a central task.

Coming back to Bob McNamara's two basic propositions—about a new announced policy of stabilization and a bombing halt—Bunker said in general we should refuse to put the war in a time frame. He has carefully separated his own language in this matter from Westy's. In any policy announcement it would be good to indicate that we expect the GVN to take over increasing military and nation building responsibility, but we must avoid giving them the feeling that we are pulling out and leaving them alone, or that we are relaxing in our effort to bring the war to a conclusion as rapidly as possible. In general, we must keep flexible and try to conduct the war with maximum imagination within accepted limits. Bunker's position on bombing is set out in paragraph 1, above.

Walt

411. Editorial Note

Exchanges between the North Vietnamese and the Romanian Governments comprised the channel later termed Packers by the Johnson administration. In telegram 604 from Bucharest, October 25, 1967, Ambassador to Romania Richard Davis reported on Romanian Premier Ion Gheorghe Maurer's visit to Hanoi in early October. Maurer's two-point package presented to Ho Chi Minh consisted of an insistence that the United States "must stop immediately, unconditionally, and once and for all" the bombardment of the DRV and that the North Vietnamese "must declare its agreement to start negotiations with US on elimination of conflict." Maurer stated that U.S. flexibility strengthened moderates in Hanoi. Most important, he was convinced that the DRV would allow the South Vietnamese people to decide their own fate and would not insist upon reunification or an end to a U.S. presence in South Viet-

nam. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET)

As a result of instructions received in telegram 63057 to Bucharest, November 1, the next day Davis submitted to Maurer a number of questions about his conversations in Hanoi. (Ibid.) As reported in telegram 718 from Bucharest, November 15, Maurer further clarified his sense that the North Vietnamese would continue fighting concurrently with negotiations. In addition, he believed that they had not differentiated among talks, discussions, and negotiations, that they would accept the Geneva Accords as a basis for a settlement, and that they would request an unspecified time interval between the talks and the cessation of fighting. (Ibid.)

“Judging from his own account, Maurer appears to have done useful service in presenting to Hanoi an authoritative and forceful exposition of U.S. policy in South Viet-Nam, particularly with respect to the principle of full liberty for the South Vietnamese people to decide their own destiny,” Ambassador at Large Harriman wrote in a November 20 assessment of Maurer’s conversations in Hanoi, sent to Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Bundy. (Ibid., S–AH Files: Lot 71 D 461, Maurer)

The following day Harriman began a trip to Near Eastern and East European countries as the next step in the Packers negotiating channel. On November 24 Harriman met with the Shah of Iran to discuss his proposal for a six-nation group to guarantee the peace process in Vietnam. Harriman also discouraged an effort by the Shah to contact Mai Van Bo to sound out the possibility of dispatching an Iranian intermediary to Hanoi. (Telegram 2008/Govto 7 from Rawalpindi, November 24; *ibid.*, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET)

Harriman’s next stop was Pakistan, where he represented the U.S. Government at the dedication of the Mangla Dam. In telegram 807 from Karachi, November 1, Ambassador to Pakistan Benjamin Oehlert had reported that Prime Minister Ayub Khan informed him of remarks made to Khan by Maurer that Ho Chi Minh accepted that “the withdrawal of USG and Allied forces would have to be accompanied by both Vietnamese withdrawal and also by the creation of an international presence in South Vietnam to supervise a referendum and to keep the peace.” (Ibid.) On November 25 Ayub Khan, pointing to flexibility in the position that the North Vietnamese put forth in recent discussions with the Romanian Government, underscored the importance of this channel and advised following through with it. (Telegram 2016/Govto 9 from Rawalpindi, November 25; *ibid.*, S–AH Files: Lot 84 D 161, Governor Harriman’s Trip, November, 1967) After a brief stop in Afghanistan, Harriman went to Yugoslavia, where he met with President Josip Broz Tito to discuss the Middle East and Vietnam. Unlike

Ayub Khan, Tito did not foresee any promising results from the Romanian channel because of the unlikelihood that the Romanians could bring both the Soviets and the Chinese together on Vietnam. (Telegram 789/Govto 26 from Bucharest, November 28; *ibid.*, EA/ACA Files: Lot 69 D 277, Vietnam File–North Vietnam)

The most important meeting Harriman had was with Prime Minister Maurer upon his arrival in Romania. As reported in telegram 803/Govto 33 from Bucharest, November 29, Maurer elaborated on discussions he held in Hanoi with North Vietnamese leaders during early October in which Premier Pham Van Dong had stated that discussions would follow (rather than could follow) the permanent cessation of bombardment. Harriman requested that Maurer undertake additional steps to bring about negotiations, adding that Maurer could inform the North Vietnamese that they could continue to re-supply forces in the South as long as such commitment did not increase above present levels. (*Ibid.*, S–AH Files: Lot 71 D 461, Maurer; see also memorandum of conversation between Maurer and Harriman, November 28, in Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Packers II)

As a result, First Deputy Foreign Minister Gheorghe Macovescu and First Secretary of the Romanian Embassy in Washington Marin Iliescu visited Hanoi December 14–18. They met twice with Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh and once with Dong, on each occasion presenting the points made by Harriman in his November 28 conversation with Maurer. The Romanians saw signs of moderation of the previously intransigent North Vietnamese position on initiating negotiations. On December 26 Romania's Ambassador in Washington, Corneliu Bogdan, contacted Harriman and requested permission to send an envoy to the United States in order to inform the U.S. Government of the discussions in Hanoi. (Memorandum of telephone conversation, December 26; Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Harriman Papers, Special Files, Public Service, Chronological File, December, 1967) Harriman did not meet with Macovescu, Iliescu, and Bogdan until January 5, 1968. For additional information on Harriman's mission, see Rudy Abramson, *Spanning the Century: The Life of W. Averell Harriman, 1891–1986* (New York: William Morrow, 1992).

412. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, November 22, 1967, 1700Z.

11714. Ref: State 72671.²

1. I saw President Thieu afternoon November 22 to discuss holiday ceasefire. I outlined our position as contained para 1 and 2 of ref-tel, pointing out that we agreed with the times proposed by the GVN, namely 24 hours for Christmas, 24 hours for New Year, and 48 hours for Tet.

2. Thieu said that in his public comment he had been mistaken about the number of hours proposed for each holiday ceasefire and had stated they should be same number of times used last year, incorrectly stating this was 24–24–48 hours. These periods were respectively 48–48–96 hours. Thieu said he had just been discussing this matter with Generals Cao Van Vien and DefMin Vy who wished to shorten these hours. They had therefore agreed on the following possible schedule: from 7 am December 24 to 7 pm December 25 (36 hours); from 7 am December 31 to 7 pm January 1 (36 hours); from 7 am January 29 to 7 am February 1 (72 hours). In addition they had agreed that New Year and Tet standdown would be contingent on NVN/VC “performance” in complying with Christmas standdown. He mentioned the large number of NVN/VC violations of past standdowns.

3. I pointed out that General Westmoreland’s preference had been for 24–24–48 hours. Thieu appeared to have no personal objection to our view, commenting that it was primarily a military matter, and that 24 hours was a bare minimum and 36–36–72 a maximum position.

4. In connection with the possibility of the GVN offering to meet with the other side to discuss a longer pause, I suggested to Thieu that he should follow the same procedure as was followed last year with respect to a GVN announcement about meeting with the NVN. Thieu said he was agreeable that an announcement be made of GVN willingness to meet with the NVN to discuss anything that might be useful.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET. Secret; Immediate; Exdis. Repeated to Seoul, Manila, Bangkok, Canberra, Wellington, and CINCPAC for POLAD.

² In telegram 72671 to Saigon, November 21, the Department approved cease-fires for Christmas, New Year’s, and Tet of 24, 24, and 48 hours, respectively, recognizing the need for flexibility in order to respond to additional cease-fire offers by the NLF but expressing concern that “any more protracted cease-fire periods would cause unacceptable risks to our forces.” (Ibid.)

5. Thieu was also agreeable to the idea of calling a meeting of the Ambassadors of the seven nations in Saigon to discuss these matters once the US-GVN position was settled. He did not seem to feel that this meeting was a matter of urgency, however.

6. *Comment:* I think that Thieu's suggestion that implementation of the New Year and Tet ceasefires should be dependent on NVA/VC good faith is a very useful one. I will discuss with General Abrams tomorrow whether the slightly longer hours suggested by Thieu are acceptable from a military viewpoint and you may wish to do the same simultaneously with General Westmoreland. If General Abrams thinks so, and if Ambassador Bunker and General Westmoreland agree, I recommend that we accept the GVN proposal of 36–36–72 hours and include in the announcement the condition for the subsequent ceasefires. This would appear to be responsive to GVN initiative and the announcement could be supplemented by any language you desire on NVN/VC not "taking advantage" of standdown to accelerate supply movements. If 24–24–48 appears clearly preferable to us, General Abrams can talk to General Vien, and I feel reasonably sure they will accept our position on this point.

7. Once we are agreed on our joint position we will follow up with the GVN regarding the actual calling of the Ambassadors' meeting and the exact terms of the subsequent announcements, including the GVN announcement about being willing to meet with the other side to discuss a longer pause, along the lines used during the 1967 Tet period.

Locke

413. Telegram From the Deputy Ambassador to Vietnam (Locke) to the President's Special Assistant (Rostow), Secretary of State Rusk, Secretary of Defense McNamara, and Director of Central Intelligence Helms¹

Saigon, November 24, 1967, 1249Z.

CAS 852. 1. In 23 November discussion with [less than 1 line of source text not declassified] Minister Vien agreed to release Sau Ha to American custody for one day debriefing and instructed General Loan

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–7 VIET S/BUTTERCUP. Secret; Immediate; Nodis; Buttercup; Exclusive; Via CAS Channels. Also addressed to Ambassador Bunker. Received at 8:30 a.m.

accordingly.² Procedure outlined was for Loan's police to transfer the prisoner to CIO, ostensibly for counter-intelligence exploitation, and CIO in turn to pass him to American hands.

2. Per arrangements made on Thanksgiving Day [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*], Sau Ha was released from national police prison late morning 24 November, turned over to the custody of CIO and brought under guard to [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] safehouse for four hour debriefing following which he was brought to CIO's national interrogation center where he will be held in "VIP" cell pending resolution his case re Buttercup operation.

3. Sau Ha was very nervous throughout debriefing, showed no physical condition though he had lost some weight and complained only of a bad tooth and difficulty in getting his eyes accustomed to daylight. Though he answered each question he probably withholding information and was, as expected, cagey and suspicious throughout interview. For example he said that he "was afraid of telling us things that police would get angry about."

4. According Sau Ha, who was arrested on 15 August 1967, for the first 25 days of his imprisonment he was kept in solitary detention cell located in special detention section of national police prison. After this he was moved into cell in another part prison with two other persons one of whom (Do Nhu Cong) remained while third person changed from time to time such as a "Tan," "Ba Kinh" and "Pham Loi." He remained in this cell until 22 November when he was again separated from other prisoners and kept alone until his release.

5. From date his arrest until end of August he said he was interrogated continuously, night and day. For first day or so he attempted to hold to his cover story, denying that he was in fact Sau Ha, which he held until police brought in three other prisoners (Buttercup/2, Ky Ninh and Vu Hanh) who identified him. Following this, interrogation continued and he was subjected to "water treatment" until he broke (at least partially) and commenced disclosing some of his operational contacts and activities. He said he was given, relatively speaking, "light" interrogation treatment in that he was not subjected to physical beatings with rods and whips nor the "electric shock" treatment. He received food and water throughout his imprisonment. After initial period of interrogation he was only sporadically questioned on specific points while starting circa 20 November he was asked by police to "cooperate" in a propaganda/publicity sense; this he refused to do

² In telegram CAS 809 from Saigon, November 22, Locke reported that Vien would submit a compromise to Thieu: Sau Ha and Tong would be released along with a message insisting upon a "good faith" release of two American prisoners before other VC on the list would be freed. (Ibid.)

saying that it was one thing to “declare” information under duress but quite another to betray the Viet Cong.

[Here follow a list of people arrested before Sau Ha, some of whom named him as their VC contact, and a list of persons he compromised during his interrogations.]

414. Memorandum From the Special Assistant to the Ambassador at Large (Sieverts) to the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker)¹

Washington, November 24, 1967.

Just as you left Saigon we sent a State–Defense message (State’s 71461, attached)² proposing that the release of the three sergeants by the Viet Cong in Phnom Penh should be publicly reciprocated by the release of three VC PW’s by the GVN. Governor Harriman believes strongly that this should be done, and that it should be kept separate from Buttercup. (Most of the people who worked on this message are unaware of Buttercup.)

Under Secretary Katzenbach suggested I set down a few notes on this subject, with the thought that they may assist you in handling the matter when you return to Saigon.

1. The first point to note is that, up to now, the Phnom Penh release has not been related to Buttercup. Thomas Hayden, the young American “progressive” who played a role in the release, has told us that preliminary discussions for that release began six months ago. We have an indication that the VC planned to release these men earlier, but delayed because they had not shown the proper attitude. The VC previously released American PW’s at Christmas and Tet last year and at Christmas, 1965. This month’s release may have been their Christmas release for 1967, with the timing advanced because of Gus Hertz’s death³ and Mrs. Kennedy’s visit.⁴ These are all circumstantial indications that the Phnom Penh release was not considered by the VC to be part of Buttercup.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–7 VIET S/BUTTERCUP. Secret; Nodis; Buttercup.

² Dated November 18. (Ibid., POL 27–7 VIET)

³ Gustav Hertz, an AID employee in Vietnam, was kidnaped by the VC on February 2, 1965. His September 24, 1967, death from malaria was suggested in a Radio Hanoi broadcast of November 2 and confirmed in a November 6 letter from Sihanouk to Hertz’s wife. See *The New York Times*, November 9, 1967.

⁴ Mrs. Kennedy visited Cambodia earlier that month.

2. If at some future time the VC claim it was part of Buttercup, our position will be much stronger if the GVN will have already publicly reciprocated that release. We would have firm grounds for insisting that the release of Sau Ha, et al. be matched by additional releases by the VC.

3. There is a considerable amount of interest in the press and among the families of PW's in the idea of reciprocal releases. Thus there is a degree of pressure for a prompt reciprocal release responding to the Phnom Penh release. While our public statements have avoided a commitment on this subject, we have responded to press questions by indicating that past VC releases have always been reciprocated by the GVN.

4. From Ambassador Locke's message,⁵ it appears that the main problem is that arrangements for a public reciprocal release could complicate our dealings with the GVN on Buttercup. One way to reduce this difficulty might be to propose to the GVN that this public release be handled by a military commander in a province, in a manner which, to the extent possible, avoids involving any of the GVN officials seized of Buttercup. Suitable releases could be pulled out of a PW camp and freed, with appropriate public ceremony, either at the place of release, or in their home province where they are to be reunited with their families. Under the circumstances, we could relax our past insistence that the VC to be released be likely to return to their units, and defer to the GVN's strong preference for picking men who have in effect switched sides and could be expected to return to their families.

The above are no more than suggestions, which I hope may prove useful in your handling of this subject. Needless to say, you have my personal best wishes in this, as in your many other difficult tasks.

Sincerely,

Frank A. Sieverts⁶

⁵ Document 413.

⁶ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

415. Telegram From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson in Texas¹

Washington, November 24, 1967, 11:41 p.m.

CAP 671007. Herewith a summary of highlights from Ambassador Locke's weekly telegram from Vietnam. The complete text of the telegram will be available upon your return.²

1. We are in process of discussing Christmas, New Year's and Tet cease fires with President Thieu. Whatever we agree to will be discussed with the Ambassadors of the seven troop contributing countries before release.

Thieu's idea (after talking with Generals Vien and Vy) was 36 hours Christmas, 36 New Year's and 72 Tet, with proviso that each cease fire would be contingent on the enemy's observance of preceding cease fire.

Our idea was the formulation 24–24–48 hour standdowns, which I feel sure President Thieu will accept if we wish.

2. The new Cabinet of Prime Minister Loc, installed in office November 9, is a symbol of the return to constitutional government in South Vietnam.

The new Cabinet has brought a substantial number of new faces into the government, only 7 previous members of the Cabinet remaining on.

President Thieu indicated to Ambassador Bunker on several occasions that the selection of the Cabinet was based on the need to find the best-qualified group of Ministers, who would work together as a team in resolving national problems. President Thieu is confident that the new Cabinet will be able to work together as a team.

Limited evidence would indicate that the new government is reasonably competent, honest and dedicated and there has been no evidence of serious differences between Thieu and Ky.

A framework exists for a slowly and carefully broadening of the base of the government. I would say so far, so good, but it is a little early to make definitive judgments.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 8 B (1), 6/67–11/67, Bunker's Weekly Report to the President. Secret. The President was in Texas November 21–26. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary)

² Locke's telegram has not been found. According to an unattached covering note to the President, November 27, Rostow apparently submitted a complete copy of Locke's telegram to the President when he returned from Texas. (Ibid., National Security File, Country File, Vietnam 8 B (1) B) The notation "ps" on the covering note indicates that the President saw the telegram.

3. Prime Minister Loc has made a good beginning, presenting a wide-ranging, though ambitious short-term and long-term, government program.

The program appears to be a rewritten, shorter and more modest version of the more ambitious top priority program and national policy described in Ambassador Bunker's 28th weekly telegram.

Implementation of the government program will be a major task, and only beginnings can be made on considerable parts of it in the near future.

4. The reaction of the Saigon press and the politically active public to the new Cabinet has been cautious and reserved. There is some doubt expressed that Prime Minister Loc will be able to get things moving, however, Vice President Ky told the new Cabinet he expects it to serve in office for four years.

5. We were encouraged by a conversation between Bob Komer and Vice President Ky on November 13³ in which Ky expressed his desire to do his best to help with current difficulties in the United States with respect to Vietnam.

Bob emphasized that progress in the political and military spheres during the next 6 months would be the most helpful antidote to United States criticism and frustration.

6. On November 20 the Viet Cong's Liberation Radio rejected recent public comments by President Thieu that he may soon send a letter to Ho Chi Minh, proposing direct peace talks.

The radio scorned the statement saying Thieu does not have the capacity to represent anyone. The broadcast continued that "peace negotiation arguments definitely cannot deceive anyone."

President Thieu is proceeding with his plans to send a letter to Ho sometime before Christmas and has apparently decided to ask the Japanese to transmit it to Hanoi. The Japanese Government has not responded to his request yet.⁴

³ Memorandum for the record by Komer, November 13. (Center for Military History, DepCORDS/MACV Files, Komer (Aug.–Dec. 1967))

⁴ See footnote 4, Document 402.

416. Telegram From the Commander, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (Westmoreland) to the Deputy Commander, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (Abrams)¹

Honolulu, November 25, 1967, 2203Z.

HWA 3445. Subj: Concept of situation portrayed during recent visit to Washington.

1. During my recent visit to Washington, I was required to present my views on the situation in Vietnam to Highest Authority, Secretary of Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Senate Armed Services Committee, and the House Armed Services Committee. In addition, I appeared on several nationwide television programs, addressed the National Press Club, and held an on-the-record press conference in the Pentagon. On each occasion, I presented in full or in part the following concept: we are grinding down the Communist enemy in South Vietnam, and there is evidence that manpower problems are emerging in North Vietnam. Our forces are growing stronger and becoming more proficient in the environment. The Vietnamese armed forces are getting stronger and becoming more effective on the battlefield. The Vietnamese armed forces are being provided with more modern equipment. These trends should continue, with the enemy becoming weaker and the GVN becoming stronger to the point where conceivably in two years or less the Vietnamese can shoulder a larger share of the war and thereby permit the US to begin phasing down the level of its commitment. This phase-down will probably be token at first.

2. On my own initiative, I took this position after considerable thought, based on the following considerations: I believe the concept and objective plan for our forces, as well as those of the Vietnamese, is practical and as such it should serve as an incentive. The concept is compatible with the evolution of the war since our initial commitment and portrays to the American people "some light at the end of the tunnel." The concept justifies the augmentation of troops I've asked for based on the principle of reinforcing success and also supports an increase in the strength of the Vietnamese forces and their modernization. The concept straddles the Presidential election of November 1968, implying that the election is not a bench mark from a military point of view. Finally, it puts emphasis on the essential role of the Vietnamese in carrying a major burden of their war against the Communists but also suggests that we must be prepared for a protracted commitment.

¹ Source: U.S. Army Military History Institute, William C. Westmoreland Papers, History File 25–Nov. 13 to 28, 1967. Top Secret.

3. The concept lends itself to a programmatic approach, and I would like the staff to proceed with studying the specific areas and time frames in which responsibility might be transferred from the US to the Vietnamese. Based on these studies, I visualize a program that would initiate and manage the multiple actions necessary to put the Vietnamese in a posture to make possible some transfer of responsibility at the earliest practical time.

4. Please have the staff come to grips with this matter. We will explore it in depth following analysis and upon my return.

417. Memorandum to the 303 Committee¹

Washington, November 27, 1967.

SUBJECT

Proposal for Political Party Development in South Vietnam

1. Summary

Despite the recent Presidential and National Assembly elections, Vietnam today is without political parties in any meaningful sense of the word. Although parties of one sort or other probably will evolve in time, it is urgent that this process be accelerated and guided where possible, both to help overcome Vietnamese inertia and inexperience in this area and to enable various political nuclei to contribute more effectively to the process of making the Vietnamese Government an effective instrument which is responsive to the will of the Vietnamese people. It is proposed, therefore, that [*less than 1 line of source text not*

¹ Source: National Security Council, 303 Committee, Vietnam, 1965–1969. Secret; Eyes Only. No drafting information is provided. A notation on the memorandum reads: "Approved by the 303 Committee on 1 Dec. 1967." In a covering memorandum of November 28 transmitting a copy of this memorandum to Kohler, sent through William Trueheart, Deputy Director for Coordination of INR, and concurred in by Habib, Bundy wrote: "I have reviewed the proposal of November 27, 1967 that [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] be made available to Ambassador Bunker for the support, at his discretion, of individual members of the Assembly and certain nascent political parties in South Vietnam and recommend that you support it in the 303 Committee. CIA would serve as action agent in dispensing any funds." Kohler indicated his approval on the memorandum. A notation on it reads: "Jessup notified by W[illiam] T[trueheart]. 11/28/67." Peter Jessup was a member of the NSC Staff. (Department of State, INR/IL Historical Files, East Asia Country Files, Vietnam, 1967)

declassified] be made available to Ambassador Bunker to be used selectively and at his discretion in support of individual Assembly members and of certain nascent political parties, with CIA serving as the action agent in dispensing these funds. This proposal was endorsed by Messrs. Bundy and Habib of the State Department and by Ambassador Bunker during the week of November 20th.

2. *Problem*

Although Thieu has recognized the need for forming a political party which will support the government program (and the desirability of a constructive opposition), he has expressed to the Ambassador the need for advice and assistance. Civilian politicians—even those recently elected to the Senate and the Assembly—have thus far demonstrated little talent for political organization of more than the most rudimentary sort. There is at present no functioning institutional link between the structure evolving in Saigon and the bulk of the Vietnamese people. We are thus faced with the disquieting possibility of a government and legislature which conducts its business in the capital in a manner irrelevant to the aspirations of the people in the provinces and, hence, incapable of engaging the support or positive identification of those people.

3. *Factors Bearing on the Problem*

a. *Origin of the Requirement*—This proposal was initiated by Ambassador Bunker during his recent visit to Washington.

b. *Relationship to Previous 303 Committee Actions*—To a degree this proposal is further development of the program previously authorized by the Department and the White House to provide financial assistance to selected Assembly candidates and groups during the Lower House elections. In both cases, a major objective is to foster political development through political parties.

c. *Operational Objective*—Our objective is to foster the growth of organized national political activity in South Vietnam, both in the Vietnamese National Assembly and in the countryside, so as to involve and engage the interest of the average Vietnamese citizen in the political life and developments of his country.

d. *Proposal*—It is proposed that Ambassador Bunker be given discretionary authority to stimulate and encourage the evolution of Vietnamese political groups and eventually parties through a combination of the following two approaches:

(1) Work with the various blocs within the Assembly, encouraging them to cooperate and coalesce, both to facilitate the work of the Assembly and to provide possible nuclei for the subsequent formation of political parties.

(2) Work with individual members of the Assembly who have demonstrated some understanding of the need for maintaining close ties with their constituencies so as to strengthen their local political organizations and encourage the consolidation of various local organizations.

CIA would be the action agent, working under the Ambassador's direction. In selecting groups and individuals with whom to work, the basic guidelines would be two-fold: potential for constructive work within the Assembly, whether in support of the government or in opposition to it, and potential to develop viable political activity rooted in the countryside. This activity is not aimed at the immediate formation of nation-wide mass political parties but at the initial necessary step of development of political forces and organizations which would eventually evolve by a process of coalescing and expansion into full fledged political parties. It is proposed that [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] be put at the Ambassador's disposal over the next year.

e. *Risks Involved*—Given the oft-stated American position in support of political development in South Vietnam and the assumption by most Vietnamese that the Americans work in both overt and covert ways, we believe that the embarrassment resulting from revelation of this activity would be minimal in Vietnamese eyes, although it could be blown up to considerable proportions if it came to the attention of the foreign press. Since we propose to work selectively, only with a few individuals who can demonstrate their capacity for discretion, besides meeting the guidelines noted above, we believe that these risks can be kept within tolerable limits.

f. *Support Required from Other Agencies*—None

g. *Timing of the Operation*—CIA is prepared to undertake this activity when it is endorsed by the 303 Committee.

4. *Coordination*

a. *U.S. Departments and Agencies*—This proposal was endorsed by Messrs. Bundy and Habib of the State Department during the week of 20 November 1967.

b. *U.S. Ambassador*—Ambassador Bunker endorsed the proposal during the week of 20 November 1967.

c. *Host Country*—This is a unilateral effort and no briefing of Host Country officials is planned.

5. *Recommendation*

It is recommended that the Ambassador be given discretionary authority to spend [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] during the next year within the guidelines noted above. Funds in the amount of

[less than 1 line of source text not declassified] are available in the CIA FY 68 budget. An additional [less than 1 line of source text not declassified] will be programmed for this purpose in FY 69. The Station would be expected to report periodically to the 303 Committee on the actions taken and funds expended in implementation of this proposal. Prior approval of Washington level would not be required for the expenditure of these funds.²

² For the 303 Committee's discussion of this proposal, see Document 424.

418. Memorandum From the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Secretary of Defense McNamara¹

JCSM-663-67

Washington, November 27, 1967.

SUBJECT

Policies for the Conduct of Operations in Southeast Asia over the Next Four Months (U)

1. (TS) The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on planned and recommended military operations to be conducted in Southeast Asia over the next four months.

2. (TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff have reviewed the progress and status of military operations in Southeast Asia and conclude that within the current policy guidelines, the single integrated strategy governing military operations in Southeast Asia is sound and will eventually lead to achievement of US national objectives as stated in NSAM 288² and the US military objectives stated in JCSM-307-67, dated 1 June 1967,

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, S-AH Files: Lot 71 D 461, Military Plans. Top Secret; Sensitive. An attached note from McNamara to Rusk reads: "Dean, attached are the Chiefs' recommendations for the '120 Day Program for Southeast Asia.' You may want to start your staff analyzing it. I hope to be in a position to discuss my views with you before the end of the week. Bob." A message at the end of the note indicates that Rusk approved a request for Bundy to prepare an analysis of the planned actions. Bundy's commentary that the JCS proposals "inevitably portend steady pressures for expansion" that would have little impact on North Vietnam but would have "a serious negative and unsettling effect on opinion here and abroad" are in a memorandum to Rusk, November 30. (Ibid.) See also Document 426.

² Dated March 17, 1964; see *Foreign Relations*, 1964-1968, vol. I, Document 87.

subject: "Draft Memorandum for the President on Future Actions in Vietnam (U)."³

3. (TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff also have reviewed the plans for the coming months and further measures which might be taken in Southeast Asia. They conclude that there are no new programs which can be undertaken under current policy guidelines which would result in a rapid or significantly more visible increase in the rate of progress in the near term. There are some programs which are being intensified or accelerated. These are primarily related to expansion, modernization, and other improvements in the effectiveness of the RVNAF and Revolutionary Development. However, while desirable, such acceleration of these programs cannot be expected to provide substantially greater results within the next four months.

4. (TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff have previously recommended against a standdown in military operations for any of the forthcoming holidays. They continue in the opinion that any standdown or bombing pause would be disadvantageous to allied forces in proportion to its length. Progress during the next four months is dependent upon the maintenance of pressure upon the enemy. Any action which serves to reduce the pressure will be detrimental to the achievement of our objectives.

5. (TS) Operations to support the stated objectives for the next four months will continue to be in consonance with the US national objectives. The various major programs which comprise the strategy involved in the total effort are discussed in the Appendix.⁴ While progress toward the military objectives is expected to be sustained during the period under consideration, additional gains could be realized through the modification and expansion of certain current policies as indicated in the Appendix.

6. (TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff have considered other proposals for operations to be conducted during the four-month period. Among these is Operation York II, which is strongly advocated by COMUSMACV. This operation, directed principally to establish a necessary lodgment in the Ashau Valley in Vietnam during February–March 1968, has as an essential part a raid operation by two to three ARVN battalions against Base Area 607. This base area, though a part of the enemy's Ashau Valley complex, is located principally in Laos. The Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that the proposal has merit and appears militarily necessary. However, they point out that, while the intent is to

³ See Document 187.

⁴ Not printed.

mount the operation clandestinely, there is a possibility that it will become public with attendant political problems.⁵

7. (TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend that:

a. The pressure on the enemy be maintained during the period to sustain allied progress and to prevent any military exploitation resulting from standdowns or truces.

b. The current policies for the conduct of the war in Southeast Asia during the next four months be modified and expanded to permit a fuller utilization of our military resources in accomplishing the tasks set forth in the Appendix.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

Earle G. Wheeler

Chairman

Joint Chiefs of Staff

⁵ On November 17 Westmoreland discussed with the Joint Chiefs his plans for an operation called York, a measure that would start in February 1968. One part of York would involve action against the enemy command center in the VC's Military Region 5 in the central highlands, while the second phase would consist of eradicating VC munitions stockpiles specifically in the Ashau Valley. For the third phase of York, Westmoreland envisaged preparation of the capability of amphibious assaults north of the demilitarized zone, which included utilization of C-130 aircraft from the field at Khe Sanh as transports for units of the U.S. 1st Air Cavalry Division, in order to launch an attack at the enemy's rear. Although this part of the plan did not appear to be politically feasible, a build-up of such a capability would allow for implementation of a secondary strategy that involved a sweep of the provinces from Quang Tri to Quang Ngai within a year using the 1st Air Cavalry. This effort would be supported initially by the base at Khe Sanh and then by a supply line along Highway 9. In the central area of South Vietnam, the Army's 101st Airborne would assault the VC's Military Region 6 from Phan Rang beginning December 1. In addition, the 25th Division would initiate action in War Zone C. All of these movements would constitute a pincer action with "floating" brigades in reserve. The addition of Program 5 forces would bring the troop level up to 525,000, a number adequate for the job. "For the first time I will have enough troops to really start grinding them down," Westmoreland told the military leadership. This plan would be a methodical way of grinding down their bases, instead of "moving troops all over the country putting out fires and reinforcing here and there and working on a day-to-day basis to keep ahead of the enemy." Westmoreland's scheme formed the basis of planning requirements for 1968. (Note of November 17 meeting attached to memorandum to the Joint Chiefs, November 21; Department of Defense, Official Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 911/520 (21 Nov 67), IR 3685; further documentation is *ibid.*, 907/520 (10 Nov 67), IR 3935, 3936)

419. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, November 29, 1967, 1155Z.

12129. For the President from Bunker. Herewith my twenty-ninth weekly telegram:

A. General

1. I had a long talk with President Thieu yesterday. My purpose was to provide him with my impressions of the mood in Washington and elsewhere in the United States as it related to the situation here; a summary of the main subjects I had discussed with you during my consultations; and the need for definite signs of progress during the next few months.

2. I said that one of the principal themes evident in almost all of my meetings, public and private, was the degree of commitment by the government and people of Viet-Nam to the war effort, whether the Vietnamese were carrying their full share of the load and were making the necessary sacrifices. This overall query then broke down into more specific questions as:

A) Were the Vietnamese armed forces doing their share of the fighting and what was the quality of their performance;

B) Was the government committed to a serious attack on corruption and was anything being done about it;

C) Concern over the creation of refugees through our joint military actions and concern regarding their care and rehabilitation;

D) Land reform, how much had been done and what did the government propose to do;

E) Economic stabilization and the related problem of taxes;

F) Progress in pacification and what was being done to root out the infrastructure;

G) Attitude of the GVN toward negotiations and especially toward approaches to the NLF.

3. I said that General Westmoreland, Bob Komer and I had endeavored to give a balanced and objective report of the situation here and had tried to counter what we felt had been much subjective and erroneous reporting of developments by the press. Recognizing that much remained to be done and that there were many problems still to be solved we had reported there had been nevertheless steady progress,

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Immediate; Nodis. Received at 8:33 a.m. According to a November 30 covering note attached to a copy of the telegram, Rostow sent it to the President that day. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 8B(1)[B]) The notation “ps” on the covering note indicates that the President saw the telegram. This telegram is printed in full in Pike, *The Bunker Papers*, pp. 242–250.

militarily, politically, and in pacification and nation building. We also reported that we believed that the progress made in all these areas had established a base from which together we could now accelerate the forward movement.

4. I then said that I knew that he shared our view of the importance of some early moves on the priority programs that he and I had discussed and on which there was general agreement among ourselves and the GVN. He had made this clear in his inaugural address as had Prime Minister Loc in his statement of government policy. I recognized the fact that there would probably be exaggerated expectations of progress here on various fronts and that the new government had to have time to get itself organized and functioning. On the other hand I thought it important that some early and constructive moves be made. Two had already been taken, namely the mobilization decree. Lowering or extending the draft age, extending the service of those within the draft brackets and recalling certain personnel to service; and secondly, the decree transferring the collection and administration of all land taxes to local governments. It seemed to me that a logical sequel to the land tax decree would be the promulgation of an ordinance transferring the administration of land reform to the village councils. I recalled that I had already provided him and Vice President Ky with a memorandum on this subject as well as his public remarks on the need for "massive" land reform. Thieu replied that he had this in mind and that the Minister of Agriculture was presently studying the problem.

5. I remarked that I understood that plans were also underway to restructure the provincial administration and for the training and appointment of new province chiefs. Thieu confirmed the fact that this was already in process and said that at the Cabinet meeting to be held Thursday this week, the restructuring of the provincial administration would be taken up, the relations between the province chiefs and the Ministry representatives in the provinces defined, and the responsibility of the province chief to the central government established. This would result in a reduction in the authority of the corps commanders over administrative matters and in restricting their authority to the military field. Thieu felt that this would also have a further beneficial effect in limiting opportunities for corruption. As a further move in the GVN austerity program the Cabinet will also take up the matter of closing our nightclubs and bars in Saigon.

[Here follows discussion of rice distribution and tax collection.]

9. I took up question of the holiday cease fires and referred to Ambassador Locke's talk with him on November 22² in which ideas were exchanged as to the exact span of times the stand-downs would be ob-

² See Document 412.

served on the allied side, as well as procedures to be followed in arriving at an agreed US/GVN position and in coordination with the other members of the seven nations. I said that we continue to believe that 24–24–48 hour stand-downs are the best interest of all the allied forces in Viet-Nam and would hope that we could agree on this position; that fulfillment of the stand-downs after Christmas should be based upon examination of NVN/VC performance during previous stand-downs, in light of all the circumstances at the time; and that we believe the GVN should keep open the possibility of offering to meet with the other side to discuss a longer pause, in much the same terms as was done during the 1967 Tet period.

10. Thieu replied that he had no objection to this proposed formula, what he had intended to suggest was that for Christmas and New Year's the maximum stand-down should be 36 hours and that for Tet 72 hours might be agreed to "in principle" if the performance of the NVA/VC during earlier stand-downs had been satisfactory. What he had in mind also was that the Tet stand-down could be extended if it could lead to a "fruitful result" but obviously representatives of both sides would have to meet and confer on the matter. He added that the opposing forces are too close at three points—the DMZ, the Dak To–Kontum front and in Phuoc Long and Binh Long Provinces in III Corps—to run the risk of a long stand-down which might give the enemy an opportunity for a surprise attack. He suggested that General Westmoreland confer with General Vien and agree on the terms of the stand-downs, to be followed promptly by a meeting of the seven nations' Ambassadors. Do not believe that we shall have difficulty in having our view prevail.

President Thieu has referred publicly on several recent occasions to his plans to send a letter to Ho Chi Minh regarding peace negotiations, despite the hostile comment on the idea broadcast over the Viet Cong and Hanoi radios. Thieu told the press Nov 25 that he was asking several nations, including Japan, to transmit the letter. The departure Nov 25 of Japanese Ambassador Nakayama for reassignment was the occasion for further press speculation that Nakayama would carry Thieu's letter to Ho Chi Minh. However, Nakayama told Political Counselor at the airport that no final decision or commitment to transmit Thieu's letter to Ho had been made. He pointed out the difficulties which face the Japanese Government in dealing with this question and emphasized the likelihood that the letter would be rejected by Hanoi. He made clear that he had informed Thieu of this in his final call on Nov 24 but also said that this was not a final answer by the Japanese Government.

Thieu confirmed in general Nakayama's statement but added that Nakayama had said that the Japanese "in principle" would be glad to

act as intermediary. Nakayama added that Sato did not believe that he could establish contact soon with Hanoi in view of his recent visits to the United States and to Australia; that he would wish to have some favorable indication in advance that Hanoi would be willing to receive the letter; and that while up to now Japan has had no contact with Hanoi he would endeavor to make contact.³

Thieu then ruminated on the possibility of having the letter delivered through the Pope noting that the Vatican has various ways of getting in touch with NVN authorities or through the United Nations, perhaps through the Soviet Ambassador there. I suggested to him the possibility of using the Indian Chairman of the ICC since he has direct access to the government in Hanoi. Thieu replied that he has the feeling that the Indian believes that a first step should be a bombing pause which should precede delivery of the letter and is therefore somewhat reluctant to approach him but agreed that the possibility was worth looking into. I expect to see Ambassador Lukose within the next few days and will try to feel him out.

Knowing of Thieu's concern as well as the general concern expressed publicly here over Ambassador Goldberg's testimony with reference to the NLF, I informed Thieu that I had an opportunity to talk with Ambassador Goldberg and clarified once again the fact that this move was tactical and did not represent a change in the US position. I added that we continued to believe that prospects of accomplishing inscription as a result of the GVN initiative would be very poor whereas some additional Security Council members might support a US initiative. In these circumstances I thought the best approach would be for the GVN to react positively to any US initiative to convene the Council, perhaps sending a letter to the President of the Security Council requesting a GVN participation and suggesting principles similar to those in the US draft resolution. I assured Thieu that Ambassador Goldberg would wish to consult closely with the GVN Representative in New York and would be in touch with him prior to any Security Council move. I added that I thought it was very much in the GVN interest to be represented at the UN by an able and competent individual who

³ According to an unnumbered CIA intelligence information report, November 27, political considerations in Japan might convince Prime Minister Sato to reject the initiative. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, EA/ACA Files: Lot 69 D 277, Vietnam File–Japan)

could present their views convincingly and forcefully. This is not the case with the present incumbent.⁴

[Here follows discussion of additional political, military, and economic matters.]

Bunker

⁴ Bunker reported on this conversation in greater detail in telegram 12115 from Saigon, November 29. (Ibid., S-AH Files: Lot 71 D 461, Saigon Cables-Incoming, Outgoing) In a December 6 meeting with Bunker, Thieu said that the Japanese Government had informed him that while they would continue their contact with the DRV and would deliver the letter "if their probes establish that it can be delivered," it would not object to Thieu's seeking other channels through which to accomplish this task. Bunker and Thieu discussed using other possible intermediaries such as U Thant, the Pope, or the Indian Chairman of the ICC. Thieu also stated that while his proposed letter to Ho Chi Minh had yet to be drafted, in its final form it would resemble the formulation suggested by Bunker on November 28. (Ibid.)

420. Notes of Meeting¹

Washington, November 29, 1967, 1:40–2:37 p.m.

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING
WITH
SECRETARY RUSK
SECRETARY McNAMARA
GENERAL WHEELER
CIA DIRECTOR HELMS
MR. WALT ROSTOW
MR. GEORGE CHRISTIAN
MR. TOM JOHNSON

[Here follows brief discussion of Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus.] The President asked what response had the government received on its request about stationing additional B-52s in Thailand.

General Wheeler said that Air Force Chief of Staff McConnell was in Thailand. He said Ambassador Unger sent a message to the Thai

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings. Top Secret. The meeting was held in the White House.

Prime Minister and that “we are on the right track.” General Wheeler said the Air Marshal is “relaxed” about it.

The President asked about the over-flight of B-52s over Laos.

Secretary Rusk said Souvanna Phouma² had some problems with this. Secretary Rusk recommended night-time flying if this is possible.

General Wheeler said there are three aspects involved:

(1) Recommends doing away with restriction against flying over Laos during the day and night. This will shorten the turn-around time, will permit the B-52s to get up to their twelve hundred sorties per month, and will cut down on operational cost.

(2) Even trained eyes cannot identify B-52s flying at 20,000 to 30,000 feet, and tell them apart from KC-135s which are permitted to fly over Laos now.

(3) It is no longer necessary to couple strikes in South Vietnam with the flights out of Thailand since B-52s stationed on Guam are hitting areas in South Vietnam already.

The President approved the over-flights.

The President urged State and Defense to step up additional troops from allied countries.

Secretary McNamara said Buttercup is proceeding slowly and needs a shove.

Secretary Rusk said he told Ambassador Bunker to move the operational aspects of Buttercup from Saigon.

Director Helms said he favors some operational movement.

Walt Rostow said he thought the Viet Cong release of three of our soldiers was enough to set loose three of the enemy soldiers.³

² Lao Prime Minister.

³ In telegram 76237 to Saigon, November 29, the Department transmitted a personal message from Rusk to Bunker that reads: “You should know that we have had highest level discussion here in which Buttercup came up and that there is a strong feeling among us that we should not let Buttercup shrivel up because of reluctance or fear on the part of your Vietnamese colleagues. An exchange of prisoners would itself be a most worthwhile result. A method of contact with NLF could prove to be extremely important as the future develops. We would hope that you could get Thieu’s approval for a sufficient gesture, in terms of releasing a few individuals, to get Buttercup moving.” (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–7 VIET S/BUTTERCUP)

Secretary Rusk said the *L.A. Times* is about to publish a book by Stuart Loory and David Kraslow.⁴ The book will include the code names of some of the peace probes. Secretary Rusk suggested that Bill Bundy make a speech rather than putting out a white paper. This would take a lot out of the book, particularly if Bundy used the code names.

The President suggested Bundy be put on *Issues and Answers*.

Secretary McNamara said the Canadians, the Italians and the Poles have “spilled their guts.” He said there also have been leaks from the Executive Branch people.

He said he talked with the two writers and was surprised to learn how much information they have on Warsaw and on the connection between some of the peace offenses and the bombing. The Secretary suggested we “take some of the juice out of the story by using the code names prior to publication. We could torpedo them since the code names are not important except to people who have never heard them.”

The Secretary pointed out, however, that it would have a lot of material which could prove to be embarrassing.

There was a discussion of the Perkins Committee and a decision not to approve the request.

The President said Kosygin wrote me a letter, had his ambassador bring it in, and Chal Roberts writes most of it in the *Washington Post* this morning. He said it is inconceivable how this could happen.

[Here follows a brief discussion of personnel matters.]

⁴ After a series of articles in the *Los Angeles Times*, the study by these two journalists was published as *The Secret Search for Peace in Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 1968). Marcovich and Aubrac advised Kissinger that the journalists were attempting to contact them in December; Marcovich complained that Kraslow was “after me.” (Letter from Kissinger to Read, December 6; *ibid.*, POL 27–14 VIET/PENNSYLVANIA) Kissinger suggested that Marcovich and Aubrac not meet with the reporters, but instead await his return to Paris on January 3, 1968, at which time they would attempt to re-open contact with Bo. (Memorandum for the record, December 11, and letter from Kissinger to Aubrac, December 20; both *ibid.*)

421. Memorandum From Secretary of State Rusk to President Johnson¹

Washington, November 30, 1967.

SUBJECT

Security Council Initiative on Vietnam

The Mansfield Resolution expressing the sense of the Senate that we should proceed with a renewed Vietnam initiative in the Security Council was adopted today, 82–0.² Both Ambassador Goldberg and I recommend that a move next week is preferable to one after January 1, at which time a new Council is constituted with a less favorable membership.

Ambassador Goldberg has developed a brief resolution, with some slight modifications of our own, (copy attached),³ based on a personal suggestion made to him by Paul Martin. The resolution calls for discussions within the Geneva Conference machinery. This draft has the merit of being brief, non-prejudicial, and is no different substantively from the resolution we submitted to the Security Council in 1966. This formulation, with its stress on the Geneva framework, should make the expected opposition of the Soviets and the French more embarrassing to them.

Ambassador Goldberg would like to begin discussions promptly with the members of the Security Council, including the Soviets, and we would also concert closely in New York and in Saigon with the South Vietnamese. Ambassador Bunker has already had a preliminary discussion with Thieu regarding the UN approach, and we do not anticipate any major difficulties with him.

We will not request the Secretary Council to inscribe a new item. Rather, we will seek a renewal of discussion based on the item submitted to the Council and inscribed in 1966. Nevertheless, nine votes

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET/UN. Secret; Nodis. Drafted by Sisco and cleared by Bundy and Katzenbach. The date is handwritten on the memorandum.

² See footnote 2, Document 373. The Mansfield Resolution was reported to the Senate by the Foreign Relations Committee on November 21 and adopted by the Senate as Resolution 180. For text, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1967*, pp. 1038–1039.

³ Not printed; it reads: “The Security Council, *Deeply concerned* about the situation in Vietnam: 1. *Expresses* the view that the principles on which hostilities were brought to an end by the Geneva Accords should provide a basis for the restoration of peace; 2. *Urges* that appropriate steps be taken to reactivate the Geneva Conference machinery as the international context in which it appears that fruitful discussions looking to a settlement are most likely to take place.”

are required for “adoption of the agenda” and for a substantive discussion to take place. Ambassador Goldberg estimates, and we concur, that the nine necessary votes will probably be there. There are two principal reasons: some members who hold serious reservations about involving the Security Council may be equally concerned not to embarrass the United States; moreover, we expect the reasonableness of the resolution may influence some doubters to support discussion (adoption of the agenda). Special efforts may be necessary with Ethiopia to provide the ninth vote.

There could be a resolution or an amendment submitted calling for unilateral U. S. cessation of the bombing without reciprocity from the other side. We have some very confidential information that the Indians are thinking along these lines, and we will wish to make it abundantly clear to Prime Minister Gandhi at the appropriate time that we would consider such a move inimical to our interests. We believe this could be countered effectively by a proposal based on the formulation you used in your San Antonio statement. Under such circumstances, a bald appeal for a bombing cessation probably would not pass. The likely vote is: Yes (7)—France, India, Mali, Ethiopia, Nigeria, USSR, Bulgaria; No or Abstention (8)—Argentina, Brazil, Canada, China, Japan, U.S., U.K., Denmark. By an appeal from you to the Emperor, Ethiopia might be persuaded to abstain. Finally, even though we do not expect it will be necessary, there is always the veto.

We have also weighed whether the attached resolution should be sponsored by the United States, by Canada, or by some others. Our judgment is that U. S. sponsorship of the resolution is desirable both domestically and internationally and assures greater control over the results.

Ambassador Goldberg concurs.

Dean Rusk⁴

⁴ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

422. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, December 1, 1967, 8:45 a.m.

Mr. President:

As the attached² indicate, Buttercup is in bad trouble.

The Vietnamese security services, combined with Loan's reaction to the release of prisoners, led the whole matter to surface.

How the next moves are made may be quite important; and I am sure you will wish to have your senior advisers focus hard on the matter today. The issues appear to be these:

—What we in Washington, our people in Saigon, and especially the South Vietnamese government, say about AP 27 and the stories which will follow;

—Whether we insist that the South Vietnamese regard the three U.S. prisoners released as sufficiently face-saving for our side for them to release Sau Ha and a few others to continue a contact;

—How Thieu should move to unite his government on this policy and deal with Loan. (Here the critical man to get to is Ky, to whom Loan appears to have a deep personal loyalty. This may be a good time for Loan to get some training at the Leavenworth Command and General Staff School.)³

Behind all this is a truly great unresolved issue: What should be the GVN's attitude towards the future political role of the NLF; and

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Buttercup, Vol. 1(B). Secret; Sensitive.

² CAS telegram 005 from Saigon, December 1, not printed. It discussed the Associated Press story by Barry Kramer (AP 27; also attached) which suggested that the arrest of Sau Ha was a power play by Loan. CAS 005 also reported that Loan "resigned" as the director general of the National Police because he was pressured to release an NLF emissary by the Americans. (Ibid.) The story was also carried in *The New York Times*, December 2, 1967. CAS telegram 5393, December 5, reported that the *Saigon Daily News* had printed the name of the intermediary (Sau Ha), which it had received from "police sources." (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–7 VIET S/BUTTERCUP) News accounts from Saigon on the episode were confused; the U.S. Embassy only confirmed that the thwarted effort as well as other meetings between Embassy officials and NLF representatives had occurred within the last few months. See *The New York Times*, December 2, 1967, and *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1967, p. 1040. For the original sequence of events, see footnote 4, Document 341.

³ In a December 4 memorandum to Vice President Humphrey, Helms listed several reasons for Loan's resignation, among them his resentment at the appointment as Secretary General in the Office of the Presidency of Nguyen Van Huong, a man regarded by Loan as "soft on Communism," Loan's recurrent health problems stemming from a stomach ulcer, and Loan's dissatisfaction with the Buttercup operation. Loan's resignation was not accepted. (Central Intelligence Agency, Executive Registry Subject Files, Job 80–R01580R, Peace Talks)

how can a South Vietnamese governmental consensus be achieved without splitting the non-Communists.

As you know, my own view has been that we should work to persuade them to take the view that those now fighting with the VC have the right to engage in organized politics under two conditions:

- they stop the fighting;
- they recognize the legitimacy of the Constitution.

The underlying problem for the South Vietnamese is that they have not yet achieved enough organized political unity—and a big national political party—to face the Communists in an election. (This came out quite clearly in the Clifford–Taylor discussions with the Foreign Minister, Do.)⁴

It is most unlikely that Hanoi, via the NLF agents, is now prepared to accept a southern solution on the basis of the two principles set out above. As the talk of the NLF program, coalition government, etc., develops, it is essential that we and the South Vietnamese develop soon a clear, firm and common position on which to stand before the world (and the U.S. public) as well as in such private contacts as may generate.

Again, let me underline, I do not believe that the Buttercup contact reflected a firm determination in Hanoi and the NLF to negotiate a solution in the South now, which would be acceptable to us and the South Vietnamese. One of their probable objectives, in fact, was to produce the kind of division among the South Vietnamese and between us and them which appears to be surfacing. But that fact does not relieve us from formulating a position that is lucid; and using all our skill to persuade Thieu and the political leadership in the Vietnamese executive and legislative branches to line up with us. We shall only be able to do this if we make it clear that by backing the constitutional process firmly, we are backing them; and we are not looking for some face-saving way to turn political power in the South over to the Communists.

W. W. Rostow⁵

⁴ Regarding the Clifford–Taylor mission, see Document 253.

⁵ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

423. Note From the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (Bundy) to Secretary of State Rusk¹

Washington, December 1, 1967.

Phil Habib and I have discussed this situation, including Walt Rostow's memorandum.² Our key conclusions are these:

1. The handling of Buttercup does depend on Thieu working things out with Ky, and either directly or through Ky with Loan. Thieu will almost certainly see this as clearly as we do.

2. While Buttercup is in trouble, we are by no means without hope on it. Our latest [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] information is that Ky has persuaded Loan to stay, and there might quite well be enough give in Loan's present views to permit at least the release of Sau Ha. The press leak conceivably could reflect the kind of muttering and spreading of the story depicted in the two [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] reports I gave you, which so far as we can tell ante-dates the information—apparently reliable—that Loan is back aboard.

3. In any event, quiet discussion between Bunker and Thieu will give us a much clearer reading, and this is obviously what Bunker intends to do without any further instructions from us.

4. We believe Walt Rostow is way ahead of the game both in the suggestion that anything be done to get Loan clean out of the picture at this stage, and in the suggestion that Bunker try to press Thieu on the whole GVN attitude toward the future of NLF supporters. On the former, it seems entirely possible that Loan is back in the fold, and in any event his forced departure might deepen the very split that it is essential to heal. As to the GVN basic attitude toward the NLF, Bunker has already made crystal clear his belief that any pressure on this point is wholly premature. He did this in September in rejecting Walt's draft letter from the President, and he has repeated this view during his recent consultations with both Phil and myself. Bunker has made leading comments in this direction in his talks with Thieu and Loc since his return, and it seems apparent to us that he knows what he is doing and is handling this aspect at just the proper pace.

W.P.B.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–7 VIET S/BUTTERCUP. Top Secret; Buttercup. A copy was sent to Katzenbach.

² Document 422.

424. Memorandum for the Record¹

Washington, December 1, 1967.

SUBJECT

Minutes of the Meeting of the 303 Committee, 1 December 1967

PRESENT

Mr. Rostow, Mr. Kohler, Mr. Nitze, and Mr. Helms.

Mr. William Colby was present for Item 1.

[Here follows a list of the persons present for non-Vietnam items.]

1. *South Vietnam—Proposal for Political Party Development*

a. In regard to the South Vietnam proposal for political party development,² Mr. Nitze raised an issue of principle: The requested slush fund would appear to run counter to the anti-corruption crusade, particularly if accomplished by individual handouts.

b. Mr. Kohler stated that he had examined the matter carefully and recalled that the committee had turned down handout-type funds at the time of the election and that the policy intent this time was clearly understood to be for institution-building purposes only. Ambassador Bunker, himself, had described the funds as seed money.

c. Mr. Rostow asked if there was a specific plan for the expenditures. Mr. Colby replied that there was not, but the thinking had been in terms of recent favorable developments in the Assembly, in the coalescing of “think-alikes,” in regional beginnings, identifying leaders and local talent, organizing cadres, and in the use of media.

d. Mr. Rostow warned against taking a long-range, the-election-is-still-four-years-off point of view and urged getting to work right away determining which groups in the society might coalesce, what indigenous money sources existed, and planning party organization. He insisted that a professional plan was needed and asked for regular reporting on developments.

[Here follows discussion of unrelated matters.]

Peter Jessup

¹ Source: National Security Council, 303 Committee Minutes, 1967. Secret; Eyes Only. The portion of the memorandum dealing with South Vietnam was excerpted and transmitted to Bundy in a December 4 memorandum from Trueheart. (Department of State, INR/IL Historical Files, East Asia Country File, Vietnam, 1967)

² See Document 417.

425. Memorandum of Conversation Between the Ambassador at Large (Harriman) and President Johnson¹

Washington, December 2, 1967.

I reported to the President regarding my trip² in the early afternoon, Saturday, December 2nd. He came to the car to meet me on the road in front of the Rose Garden. TV and reporters were there and he asked me to say a word to them, and then we went in to his office for a talk. No one was present.

[Here follows discussion of Harriman's trip to Pakistan.]

On the rest of the trip I underlined the unanimous information I got—Ayub, Tito and Maurer—that the Russians would increase their assistance to North Vietnam in order to permit them to “hold out” to offset any U.S. escalation. I explained that the Soviets considered their vital interests to be at stake in North Vietnam paralleling our stake in South Vietnam. I said this should be weighed in connection with our policies. I told him I thought we ought to keep in close contact with the Russians because we could get into greater confrontation, which would become harder and harder for us to unwind. I explained Tito's view that the Kremlin leaders and he agreed that the U.S. and USSR had common interests in Southeast Asia. He then showed me the message he had received from Kosygin in June, which was a very rough telegram threatening catastrophic war unless fighting was stopped. I commented that the Russians were off-balance at the time, and I would discount it in our long-run relations. I said I had told all the men I had talked to of the importance that the Russians should realize they should use their influence in Hanoi or we would have increasing difficulties. All agreed that the Soviets didn't have sufficient influence at the present time, but would go along with Hanoi if Hanoi decided to negotiate. I also explained Tito's readiness to help in the Middle East and information that he had already communicated with Nasser.

I told him two things that I thought I had cleared up in my talks on the trip. One was that the Soviets definitely wanted to end the fighting in Vietnam if it were possible, even though they would increase aid if we escalated; and secondly, that there was no basic difference in foreign policy between Brezhnev and Kosygin. They had decided to work together, and when one spoke, he had the agreement of the other.

¹ Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Harriman Papers, Special Files, Public Service, Subject Files, Johnson, Lyndon 1967. Absolutely Personal and Secret. Drafted by Harriman on December 12.

² See Document 411.

The President remarked that there was nothing to do now but to go on with our policy (cleaning up a few targets that had not yet been approved) and hold on until the Communists gave in, in accordance with the opinions expressed at the elder statesmen's meeting, and that we shouldn't talk any more about negotiations. This was at the very end of the talk and as we were standing up, I didn't have a chance to argue about it except to say all the evidence I had received was that Hanoi doubted U.S. sincerity in negotiations offers and *not* that they were a sign of weakness.

[Here follows discussion of the death of Francis Cardinal Spellman and a tentative replacement for Goldberg if he left the UN Mission.]

W. Averell Harriman³

³ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

426. Paper Prepared by the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (Bundy)¹

Washington, December 5, 1967.

ANALYSIS OF WESTMORELAND PROPOSALS²

Basic Policy Questions

1. The proposals would be a complete departure from our present policy of "self-defense" in a continuing action. The concept of "hot pursuit" is itself a misnomer and has no standing in international law—whereas "self-defense" does. Any concept of hot pursuit by "fire" has no standing of any sort under any name.

2. Action in accordance with the proposals would be seen everywhere as a deliberate attack into Cambodia. Whatever the justification in our minds, we would incur a serious net minus.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Bundy Files: Lot 85 D 240, Top Secret WPB Chron., Nov.–Dec. 1967. Top Secret.

² Reference is to the proposed courses of action Westmoreland made to the JCS, which the Chiefs addressed in JCSM–663–67, Document 418. In a November 30 memorandum to Rusk, Bundy assessed these proposals and appended a spreadsheet analysis of them. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Bundy Files: Lot 85 D 240, Top Secret WPB Chron., Nov.–Dec. 1967)

3. Such action would be seen as “escalation” and would be taken to confirm that President Eisenhower was in some sense speaking for this Administration.³ It would thus redouble speculation that we have in mind invasion of North Viet-Nam and some major drastic further action in Laos.

4. Since the initiative would appear to lie to a major degree with us, the action would undercut our position that we seek no wider war.

5. Even in military terms, the advantages of such action must be weighed against the *military* reactions of Sihanouk and of the VC/NVA. Sihanouk might well switch to stronger and even overt assistance, and the VC/NVA have the easy option of simply putting their rest areas a little further away.

Immediate Problems

1. The time urgency of this action, even in its own terms, is not clear.

2. With our note and evidence just delivered to Sihanouk yesterday,⁴ he would undoubtedly make our action public and depict it as a cynical prelude to larger action. He would be believed.

3. The idea of B-52 strikes is particularly objectionable.

4. By an exchange of messages, we may be able to work out some form of authority that will substantially assist Westmoreland to meet his problem with a minimum of drawbacks. For example, patrols on the South Vietnamese side could be intensified, with artillery ready to fire if these patrols ran into action. If there is an accompanying action and contact, artillery could be used to at least limited ranges into the areas Westmoreland wants to hit. While this could hardly be more than harassing, it should have much of the effect Westmoreland wants to achieve. It would do so without destroying our basic rationale. But we should be clear just what we are doing and try to reaffirm certain basic guidelines to Westmoreland at the same time.

³ In a televised interview of November 28, Eisenhower advocated a limited invasion of North Vietnam to destroy artillery positions near the DMZ and pursuit of enemy forces retreating into Cambodia and Laos. See *The New York Times*, November 29, 1967.

⁴ The text of the U.S. note transmitted by Australia is printed in *Foreign Relations*, 1964–1968, vol. XXVII, Document 212.

427. Memorandum of Conversation¹

Washington, December 5, 1967, 10 a.m.

SUBJECT

Viet-Nam and the United Nations

PARTICIPANTS

Sir Patrick Dean, British Ambassador

Mr. Michael Wilford, Counselor, British Embassy

The Secretary

Irving Cheslaw, EUR/BMI

Sir Patrick Dean said that Foreign Secretary Brown has always been in favor of Security Council action if this could clearly help promote negotiations or lead to a reduction in fighting. Whether the present moment was right could only be judged when action was initiated. He recognized, however, that the U.S. Government was bound to take very serious account of the Senate resolution.² The Foreign Secretary was also under constant pressure to take some initiative either through the UN or through the Geneva machinery, and interest would increase once it was evident that the USG was making another attempt through the Security Council.

Sir Patrick added that he had instructions to tell the Secretary that, in these circumstances, Mr. Brown would help all that he could, both generally and with the Russians, when any U.S. initiative got underway.

Specifically, he would help on inscription and by supporting a simple resolution to get the Geneva machinery going. U.S. and UK delegations in New York would need to keep in close touch if there were moves towards a resolution referring to a cessation of bombing, which Foreign Secretary Brown thought was very probable. HMG might be able to resist a simple demand for a cessation of bombing in standard Communist terms. But Mr. Brown thought it more likely that we would be faced with an outwardly reasonable resolution calling for bombing to stop so that talks could begin. If a resolution or amendment in these terms came to a vote, Mr. Brown would find it difficult to oppose or abstain.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET. Secret; Exdis. Drafted by Cheslaw, Desk Officer for the United Kingdom, and approved in S on December 8. The meeting was held in Rusk's office.

² See footnote 2, Document 421.

The British Ambassador also gave the Secretary the drafts of both an “inspired” parliamentary question and a proposed reply on this general subject. The question would ask what was HMG’s policy toward further consideration of the Viet-Nam conflict by the UN. The Foreign Secretary would reply that he was in favor of action through the UN as soon as it was possible for the organization to play a part in promoting a negotiated settlement or in encouraging effective negotiations, either through the Geneva Conference of which the British Foreign Secretary was co-chairman or through any other machinery which might lead to a solution.³

The Secretary said that he would not object if HMG thought it would be useful to talk privately with Kuznetsov in New York or with its contacts in Moscow.

The Secretary observed that a San Antonio formula was reasonable, i.e., that bombing would stop with the assurance of talks without undue delay and without seeking any military advantages. A proposal to stop bombing permanently for the possibility of talks would be “too thin.”

The Secretary pointed out that the President had not yet made a final decision, and that there would be full consultation before we moved in New York. Meanwhile, he noted that two divisions were reportedly on the move from North to South Viet-Nam.

³ Attached but not printed is an unofficial and undated excerpt of an answer to Parliament in which the British Government pledged Brown’s support for the U.S.-led effort on the UN initiative, particularly in connection “with the Russians.” The British Government would state that it would not oppose an “outwardly reasonable” resolution calling for a halt in order to start talking. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET) NSC Staffer Nathaniel Davis cautioned, however, that it would be very difficult for the British to go along. “We have already made the British uncomfortable with our Middle East position, and they may become more so,” he asserted in a December 4 memorandum to Rostow. “A Vietnam debate would add still another strain in our relationship.” (Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Walt Rostow, Meetings with the President, July–December 1967)

428. Notes of Meeting¹

Washington, December 5, 1967, 1:18–2:37 p.m.

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING
WITH
THE VICE PRESIDENT
SECRETARY McNAMARA
SECRETARY RUSK
CYRUS VANCE
CIA DIRECTOR HELMS
WALT ROSTOW
GEORGE CHRISTIAN
TOM JOHNSON

[Here follows discussion of the Cyprus crisis.]

The President then discussed with Secretary Rusk Mr. George Brown's current attitudes, particularly related to a resolution before the United Nations.²

The President said this might get you where I had feared we would get. I have feared that we would be asked to stop the bombing with nothing in return. We must anticipate the worst and prepare for it.

Secretary Rusk said that no decision had been made whether to do anything at all.

The President said he thought that it was possible to get nine votes in the Security Council.

Secretary Rusk said that Ethiopia agreed to put the matter on the agenda if the United States wished.³

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings. No classification marking. The meeting was held in the White House.

² See Document 427.

³ In telegram 2925 from USUN, December 9, Goldberg informed the Department that there were a "sure eight votes" in support of putting the resolution on the agenda (Argentina, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States), but that "the ninth vote, Ethiopia, is still doubtful, although the Permanent Representative tells me he personally would favor re-inscription of the question." At the time, the Ethiopian Representative still had no instructions from his government on the issue. Goldberg believed that the Representative would not get such instructions "until we take a move which would force the Ethiopian Government to take a stand." Goldberg added that the Republic of China was the only member of the Security Council "strongly opposed to inviting representatives of the NLF." (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S) In a December 9 discussion with Senator Gale McGee (D-WY) regarding his possibly replacing Goldberg, the President commented on the UN consideration of the Vietnam situation: "If they get a resolution and make us stop the bombing, we're in one hell of a shit." (Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and McGee, December 9, 1967, 11 a.m., Tape F67.15, Side A, PNO 1 and 2)

Secretary Rusk said that he doubts that much will happen on NPT. He said the question of safeguards is a sticky one and that the Germans have political problems on it.

Secretary McNamara said two cables came in from General Westmoreland concerning possible campaigns in Laos and Cambodia.⁴

General Wheeler said that there are 5,000 troops and supplies in the Tri-Border area. There are three regiments and bridges which are important to the resupply of the enemy operating out of Cambodia. The first North Vietnamese division withdrew. Its headquarters is a mile from the border and 15 miles from Dakto.

General Wheeler said the enemy is not to go in. They are refitting and replenishing their manpower.

We propose the use of B-52s and tactical aircraft for 72 hours. The B-52s could operate at night.

General Wheeler said that General Westmoreland discussed this operation with Ambassador Bunker. Ambassador Bunker concurs.

General Wheeler pointed out that there is no question that all of this is in Cambodia.

“We have known for two years that these people have been there.”

Secretary McNamara said this action raises very serious political problems which outweigh the military gains. Secretary Rusk said he would draw a distinction between operations in Laos and operations in Cambodia. He said he would also draw a distinction between full-scale operations and a raid.

Secretary Rusk said that if we hit the enemy in Cambodia and possibly kill Cambodian personnel, this may give them reason to commit their forces against us.

Secretary McNamara said that the President could veto a “stop the bombing” resolution in the United Nations because of world and domestic reaction. The Secretary said the action against Cambodia would destroy us in the U.N.

In addition, the Secretary said that the U.S. cannot run B-52s around the clock without public knowledge of that.

Dick Helms said he would like to look at this before making a recommendation. Secretary Rusk asked if U.S. forces were going on with night and day raids against infiltration routes used by the regiment which is being brought into South Vietnam.

General Wheeler said yes, to the best of our ability. General Wheeler said the proposal was to use a South Vietnamese Airborne

⁴ Not found.

Brigade in area 607 to destroy troops and ammunition. He said it is occupied by supply centers and troops. He said the raid would take three days and would involve 1,500 to 1,600 South Vietnamese troops along with about 30 U.S. advisors.

Secretary McNamara said the Laos situation is different. He said the border is ill-defined. He said the chances of getting caught are much different.

Secretary Rusk said there is not a fraction of as much a problem in Laos as there is in Cambodia.

Secretary McNamara said he recommended going ahead with the Laos operation. Secretary Rusk agreed.

The President approved.⁵

⁵ The President and his advisers continued the discussions on the proposed actions in Cambodia in the evening of December 5. After Rusk, McNamara, and Clifford expressed concern and opposition, the President decided to require Westmoreland to justify his proposed offensive operations in Cambodia and to have Bunker discuss why he supported this action. (Notes of Meeting in Cabinet Room, December 5, 6:02–7:15 p.m.; Johnson Library, Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings) For an account of the meeting, see *Foreign Relations, 1964–1968*, vol. XXVII, Document 216.

429. Telegram From the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker) to the President's Special Assistant (Rostow), Secretary of State Rusk, Secretary of Defense McNamara, and Director of Central Intelligence Helms¹

Saigon, December 6, 1967, 1055Z.

CAS 095. In my meeting with Thieu today I expressed the desire to have a serious talk with him about the Buttercup case, especially in view of the events of recent days. I noted the great importance which President Johnson attached to this matter and said that the recent leaks in the press have raised a serious question about our ability to work together closely and confidentially on such matters in the future.

I expressed my appreciation to the President for the talks which he and Minister Vien and General Loan had held with our [*less than 1*

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–7 VIET S/BUTTERCUP. Secret; Immediate; Nodis, Buttercup; Exclusive; Via CAS Channels. Received at 8:02 a.m.

line of source text not declassified] officer.² These have been most useful in achieving better understanding on both sides. Now, however, the situation is confused and disrupted, perhaps the opportunity for moving ahead has been destroyed by the actions of General Loan who has obviously been talking to the press. The question which confronts us now is whether there is some way which we can follow through on this case and still achieve some useful aim.

Two points in particular were noted as being of serious importance. First is the matter of prisoner exchange which is a subject of intense interest to all Americans. The position of the American Government with its own citizens would be most difficult were we to fail to pursue every avenue that might result in the release of American prisoners of war, especially the sick and wounded. I recalled my talks with President Johnson on this subject. Further, the interests of neither of the two governments would be served by a disclosure on the part of the enemy that we were procrastinating or holding back in any way on exchange of prisoners of war. To appear to be holding back is running the risk of being embarrassed by Hanoi and the Viet Cong which would to them be a psychological victory.

Secondly, the situation with which we were presented offered what was really the first possibility of entering into a dialogue with members of the Front and determining whether there are any fissures in the Front which we might exploit. To discover whether such potential exists seems to us a matter of great importance both to the GVN and to ourselves. If subsequent developments should confirm such possibilities, it is evident we would both have much to gain.

While stressing the significance we attached to these matters, I emphasized that the U.S. Government has no intention of entering into talks with the NLF of which he, President Thieu, is not informed; that responses to political overtures would take place only after fullest consultation on both sides.

Our disappointment is the greater because this matter could have been quietly and discreetly handled without posing difficulties to either of our governments. On the American side, knowledge of this affair has been closely controlled and restricted to a very few officials. Now, as a result of these most unfortunate leaks and rumors, it is a question whether this avenue to prisoner exchange and possibly the establishment of some kind of dialogue is still open.

² In meetings with Loan on November 27 and 28, reported in CAS telegrams 017 and 018, both December 2, and with Vien on November 29, reported in CAS telegram 020, December 2, [*text not declassified*] found them firmly insistent upon releasing only Sau Ha and Tong, but no other prisoners. (All *ibid.*)

Finally, I advised President Thieu that it was my intention always to deal with him frankly and openly and that I expected that he would deal with me in the same way. In this case a confidence has been violated by General Loan who by his actions had in effect taken GVN policy into his own hands and frustrated a matter of great sensitivity and importance to us all.

Thieu stated that he feared, in view of the unfortunate press revelations, it was not possible now to release all of those on whom action had been requested by Buttercup/1. This would be construed as action by the GVN under pressure from the Americans. Regretful therefore as this is, the action which the Mission requested him to take (as reported in CAS-021)³ is not possible at this time. President Thieu then asked me if I had any ideas on how we might now proceed.

I suggested that in spite of the difficulties which had been imposed, we still ought to do whatever is possible in an attempt to salvage this line of communication and to get on with the discussion of prisoner exchange. Because of the discussion in the press, there is no assurance at this point that we can persuade Buttercup/2 and Sau Ha to return to COSVN. The minimum we can do at this time is to release Sau Ha if he is willing to return and we propose that Mai Thi Vang, the wife of Buttercup/1, be released to accompany him. She is not well and of no real importance to anyone except her husband, and her release could be justified on humanitarian grounds. It is possible that her release along with Sau Ha just might enable us to keep open this line of communication. The President took note of my proposal and said that we would consider it carefully.

I said that in view of all the current publicity and speculation in the press, it probably would be advisable to let the matter rest for a few days until the public interest in it subsides; I would then wish to take up the matter again to see whether we could not move it ahead. Thieu agreed that this would be advisable.

We then discussed my suggestion that he issue a press statement clarifying misleading statements which have been reported in the local press. This matter will be covered in other channels.

³ Dated December 2. (Ibid.)

430. Telegram From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker)¹

Washington, December 6, 1967, 2227Z.

CAP 671027. You should know we had a most engaging day here with David Lilienthal. He saw the President, met the press, and told the Cabinet about the 135-page program put in by the Vietnamese.²

In addition he happened to put his head in when I was having lunch in my office with Jean Monnet. You would have been charmed to see Jean's eyes come alive at this kind of practical planning, engaging the members of the Senate as well as young graduate students, etc. It clearly brought back his immediate post-war days in setting up the French modernization plan.

I cannot assess the quality of the program, of course, from this distance. But as a father of the idea of starting this kind of planning while the war was on—and from my experience in developing nations³—I should think it would be wise for the Vietnamese Government to consider the following:

—Thieu should try to make the program a living part of the government. You know very well how a plan can die if the responsible Ministers treat it as some intrusive piece of paper.

—The government should try to engage the Senate and lower house in studying the plan and making recommendations. It is one way of getting them all to focus on their future and to give the plan political life.

—The government should consider publishing the program and then generating discussions in the cities and towns of the country as well as in trade unions, universities, etc.

This assumes, of course, that there is enough meat and potatoes in it to stir people's imaginations.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 1B(1), Economic Activity & Planning. Confidential; Via CAS Channels.

² Lilienthal met with the President twice on December 6: alone from 11:41 a.m. through 12:12 p.m., and then with the full Cabinet from 12:12 p.m. through 1:22 p.m. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary) Lilienthal headed the American side of a joint U.S.–South Vietnamese non-governmental team planning for postwar development in Vietnam; see footnote 1, Document 91. The report, prepared by Vietnamese professors and graduate students, included an analysis of a variety of technical projects and economic measures to assure sustainable and long-term growth in Vietnam. Lilienthal described the specifics of the report in a December 6 press conference that followed the Cabinet meeting. See Department of State *Bulletin*, December 25, 1967, pp. 864–867.

³ Rostow's academic expertise was in development policy; in 1960, then a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, he published *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, a book that became the basis for the nation-building programs adopted during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.

You will be clear that this is a personal view which you will feel wholly free to ignore if it doesn't make sense.

431. Memorandum From the Counsel to the President (McPherson) to President Johnson¹

Washington, December 7, 1967, 12:30 p.m.

I saw Senator Mansfield this morning. After going over the reasons for Secretary Rusk not testifying,² I said "This is really a procedural matter. The President knows how you feel about Vietnam. But he hopes you can support him on this procedural question." He said, "All right, I'll try to support him. I think he's wrong, but I'll try to support him. But you ought to be aware that this could develop into a Constitutional crisis." He said he thought the Gore motion would "probably" fail; not enough Senators were worked up over it, although Morse, Gore and others will doubtless talk about it on the Senate Floor.

I talked to the Secretary later. The question was, whether he would decline on the merits, or temporize by saying that he would be out of the country beginning Sunday.³ We decided he should reply on the merits, and I believe he plans to send a letter to Fulbright today.⁴

Harry C. McPherson, Jr.⁵

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Office Files of Harry McPherson, Rusk Testimony. No classification marking.

² On November 30 Fulbright sent Rusk a letter suggesting that the Secretary participate in public hearings. (Ibid.)

³ December 10.

⁴ In the letter to Fulbright, December 7 (sent the next day after approval by the President), Rusk refused to testify in open session, preferring instead to address the Vietnam issue in executive session. (Johnson Library, Office Files of Harry McPherson, Rusk Testimony) In commenting on the letter in a memorandum transmitting it to the President, McPherson noted that "the question is whether the Secretary just waffles it now—since he is going to be out of town for the balance of the session—or answers it directly. I have been inclined both ways; I'd like to avoid giving Morse and Gore ammunition with which to tie up the Senate with long 'Constitutional' speeches on whether the Executive Branch *must* testify in open session. At the same time, a 'delaying' answer would suggest that he might go up for an open session in January. I think it's probably better to bite the bullet now rather than to give that impression. Rusk agrees, and hence this letter." (Ibid.)

⁵ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

432. Telegram From the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker) to the President's Special Assistant (Rostow), Secretary of State Rusk, Secretary of Defense McNamara, and Director of Central Intelligence Helms¹

Saigon, December 8, 1967, 1121Z.

CAS 140. 1. At Vien's request [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] met with him on 8 December. Vien began the conversation referring to Ambassador Bunker's recent talk with President Thieu on the Buttercup case.² Vien indicated he had then met with President Thieu, discussed the various ramifications of the Buttercup case and the many press reports relating to it, and that President Thieu had concluded the conversation by agreeing "in principle" to the release of both Sau Ha and Buttercup/1's wife. Vien remarked that Thieu and he considered the timing of the release of Sau Ha and Buttercup/1's wife to be important and that the release should not take place for "one or two weeks." In addition to allowing time for the press stories to die down and general curiosity to abate, Vien also feels additional time before their release is necessary for General Loan's emotional feelings on this case to simmer down before Vien discussed the release of Buttercup/1's wife with Loan. Vien feels that Loan will, undoubtedly, become quite excited about this release of Buttercup/1's wife and will react much as he has in the past several weeks on the Buttercup case in general. Vien, therefore, plans to wait until 11 or 12 December before discussing the next Buttercup move with Loan. [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] commented that it would be most desirable for us to launch the next step of the operation no later than about one week from now since to wait much beyond that would make it more likely that Radio Hanoi or Liberation Radio will come out with a propaganda exploitation of the Buttercup operation.

2. Vien queried whether it was the American feeling that we should release both individuals to go to Buttercup/1 at the same time and was given an affirmative answer. In discussing details of how to arrange the release and our American requirement to have Sau Ha in our custody for at least 48 hours as well as having Buttercup/1's wife in our hands for one or two days both for briefings and for medical examinations, [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] proposed the following time schedule: release of Sau Ha to American custody on

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–7 VIET S/BUTTERCUP. Secret; Nodis; Buttercup; Exclusive; Via CAS Channels. Received at 8:21 a.m.

² See Document 429.

Wednesday, 13 December, release of Buttercup/1's wife on Friday, 15 December and launching them on their mission along with Buttercup/2 on Saturday or Sunday, 16 or 17 December. [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] suggested the weekend would be a quiet period during which these activities could take place while arousing a minimum of attention. [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] indicated he would like to fix these dates with Vien so that the American side could begin planning for such things as the helicopter lift and making arrangements with the U.S. military regarding the area through which the individuals would pass enroute to the NLF headquarters. Vien stated he agreed generally to this timing.

3. [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] described the need to revise our next outgoing message to Buttercup/1 and asked Vien if he personally would like to participate in drafting the message. Vien suggested that [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] work instead with Acting Commissioner of CIO, Colonel Huan, in drafting the message, describing Huan as discreet and trustworthy. [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] requested Vien stress the need for tightest security when Vien discusses this with Colonel Huan and Vien assured [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] he would do so, citing the way he himself has closely held this Buttercup information to the point where only he and President Thieu are knowledgeable of the details of the case at the top echelons of the GVN and that even the Prime Minister is only generally aware of the nature of the case. The Prime Minister was briefed by Vien in connection with the issuance of the GVN communiqué of 7 December relating to the Buttercup case.³ Vien remarked that the communiqué appeared to be effective in satisfying the interests of both the GVN and the USG even though, of course, it was not possible to make a flat denial of all aspects of the Buttercup case.

4. Vien commented that he anticipates an unpleasant session with Loan on the release of Buttercup/1's wife, that Loan has very strong views on this case and, undoubtedly, is still very much opposed to the release of Sau Ha as a result of American pressure on the GVN to do so. Vien did indicate, however, that if it should come to the point he will simply order Loan to release Buttercup/1's wife and will also insist that it be done in such a way that no security leaks spring from it.

5. Next steps in the Buttercup case will be for Vien to see Loan on either 11 or 12 December and for [*less than 1 line of source text not de-*

³ In a December 6 statement, Prime Minister Loc confirmed that the National Police had arrested a VC cadre who claimed to be trying to contact the U.S. Embassy but did not specify exactly when the arrest occurred.

classified] and Colonel Huan to work up a draft of our next outgoing message to Buttercup/1.⁴

⁴ The U.S. Government already had a draft message to send to Dang. It assured the NLF that despite the recent publicity surrounding the contacts, “sustained good will by all parties” would bring about prisoner exchanges. (CAS telegram 120 from Saigon and telegram 57993 to Saigon, both December 7; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–7 VIET S/BUTTERCUP) In a closed session appearance on December 14, Katzenbach briefed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on both the Buttercup case and the issue of NLF representation at the United Nations. (Ibid., Katzenbach Files: Lot 74 D 271, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 12/14/67)

433. Memorandum for Personal File¹

Washington, December 12, 1967, 5:30 p.m.

*Governor Harriman's call on Mr. Dean Acheson at his home,
2805 P St., N.W.*

I stopped in to see Dean Acheson late Tuesday, the twelfth, for about an hour's talk. I found that he was not as rigid as I had supposed from his broadcast (attached).² I emphasized the difference between the present-day Vietnam situation and that of Korea: (a) monolithic Communist bloc split, with deep antagonism between Moscow and Peking and my belief—confirmed by Tito—that Moscow desires to end the war and objective, similar to ours, to achieve a nonaligned Southeast Asia policy; (b) guerrillas had taken hold in South Vietnam—not true in Korea—and they would be impossible to stamp out completely by military means (I referred to revival of Huks in the Philippines).

On policy, I underlined two things that concerned me: (a) the President's alleged fear that his difficulty came from hawks (Dean said that that was not true. That his danger came from the other side); and, (b) the constant pressure of the military to expand the war with the support of certain individuals outside the Administration, such as Clark

¹ Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Harriman Papers, Special Files, Public Service, Subject File, Acheson, Dean. Confidential; Personal.

² Not printed; it is a transcript of Acheson's televised interview with college students, broadcast on December 3 over public television, in which Acheson insisted that no possibility existed for the United States to negotiate its way out of Vietnam.

Clifford and Abe Fortas. He indicated complete contempt for the judgment of both. He is opposed to expansion into Cambodia and feels the military should be held in check as Truman did.

He said his own relations with the President were not as they used to be because he had a row about a year ago about NATO, the details of which I didn't quite gather. The President evidently criticized his and Jack McCloy's position, which Acheson resented and the President exploded. I suggested he forget the incident and go back to his old relationship as the President needed his advice to offset bad advice he got from others. We agreed to compare notes again before long.

I am attaching to this memorandum Acheson's TV discussion with certain college students.

434. Telegram From Secretary of State Rusk to the Department of State¹

Brussels, December 12, 1967, 1823Z.

1005. Secto 013. For the Acting Secretary from the Secretary.

During the NATO meeting this afternoon Paul Martin came over and handed me a short piece of paper which he said represented the latest proposal by Mr. Ales Bebler, President of the World Federation of United Nations Associations. Text of proposal follows:

"Whether negotiations can start while the bombing continues or whether the bombing can stop while there are no negotiations." To this end he has put forward three propositions which read as follows:

"1. The heads of government of the five powers and the Presidents of USA and DRV agree to choose a date in the near future to be the date of the beginning of the end of the war in Viet-Nam.

2. The President of USA agrees that he will order the bombing of the territory of DRV to be definitely stopped on that day.

3. The heads of government of the five powers agree to hold on that day the opening session of the five power meeting with the sole object of organizing without delay negotiations and/or a conference on peace in Viet-Nam."

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET. Secret; Nodis. Received at 2:43 p.m. Secretary Rusk was in Brussels attending the North Atlantic Council Ministerial meeting.

Martin wanted my reactions on the spot but I told him I would have to refer it to Washington. I would like to give him some response before I leave Brussels.

My own first comments are:

(A) Bebler's proposal takes care of the word "prompt" in the San Antonio formula. It does not, however, take care of the assumption that North Viet-Nam would not take military advantage of the cessation of bombing.

(B) Our knowledge of the movement of additional major forces by North Viet-Nam is highly relevant.

(C) The grouping of the five powers, including the two Co-chairmen and the three ICC countries, is a logical way to involve the Geneva machinery without getting into complications about the composition of the conference or the possible Soviet reluctance to have China.

(D) Perhaps we should include in what we say to Paul Martin that paragraph 2 is imbalanced. Perhaps Martin should say to Bebler that paragraphs 1 and 3 are all right but that Bebler should ascertain from both sides what military measures each side will take to give substance to "the beginning of the end of the war in Viet-Nam."

(E) I doubt that this formulation would get anywhere with Hanoi especially if it is to include the most minimum element of military reciprocity included in the San Antonio formula.

(F) I have told some of my colleagues at NATO that the San Antonio formula is the minimum US position, and that it is as fair and reasonable as any proposition ever made in the course of conflict. I think we should begin to make it clear that there is no point in people knocking on our door to dilute the San Antonio formula and that if they want peace they should knock on the door of Hanoi for a change.

Would appreciate any advice as to what I should say to Paul Martin.²

Rusk

² In response, the Department advised that Martin be told to pass on to Bebler the sense that his second proposition "is lacking in balance" since it required the U.S. Government to halt the bombing while "it makes no mention whatsoever of any corresponding military action to be taken by North Viet-Nam." In addition, Bebler had excluded the GVN from his propositions. "It would be our judgment that the GVN would take most unkindly to its omission from this kind of grouping and for this reason alone we believe that the point must be made, as the Bebler approach, if made, might well become public," the Department noted. (Telegram 83910/Tosec 28 to Brussels, December 13; *ibid.*)

435. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, December 13, 1967, 1205Z.

13356. 1. During a meeting with President Thieu December 12 I went over a number of matters relating to reported US–NLF contacts and the Vietnam question in the UN Security Council.²

2. I read Thieu the UPI item about the forthcoming *Newsweek* issue alleging that meetings of American and Viet Cong representatives have taken place with increasing frequency.³ I told him that to my knowledge there was no truth in these reports and I had no idea of the source for these allegations. I gave him copies of the Department's Dec 8 statement and the summary of Ambassador Goldberg's December 7 press conference (which had earlier been sent to the GVN Foreign Office for circulation to the principal GVN offices).⁴ In discussing the story on USUN contacts, I referred specifically to the Department's assurance that we would consult with the GVN on any change in our current policy with regard to the UN and to my own public statement about consultation with the GVN regarding any such contacts.

3. I then brought Thieu up to date on developments in New York relating to possible consideration of Vietnam by the Security Council, noting that Ambassador Goldberg was keeping in close touch with the

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL US–VIET S. Secret; Priority; Exdis. Received at 1621Z. Repeated to USUN.

² In telegram 12892 from Saigon (Bunker's 30th weekly telegram), December 7, Bunker reported that the GVN was greatly concerned that the NLF would represent itself as a government to the United Nations. (Ibid., POL 27 VIET S; printed in full in Pike, *The Bunker Papers*, pp. 259–268) In a discussion with Bundy, reported in telegram 80846 to Saigon and USUN, December 7, Bui Diem "stressed that any invitation to the NLF would cause some problems in Saigon in any event, and that an invitation on a parallel basis to the GVN and NLF would raise particularly serious criticism in Saigon." (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S) Two days earlier, Foreign Minister Tran Van Do had publicly stated that the GVN was opposed to any role for the NLF in possible talks at the United Nations. See *The New York Times*, December 6, 1967. In a statement released on December 8, the Department affirmed the U.S. Government's willingness to grant visas to NLF representatives to come to the United Nations "when they are officially invited for official business," but stated that it would not deal with the NLF without first consulting with Saigon. See *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1967, p. 1041.

³ The article, entitled "What's In a Word? Meetings Between Spokesmen of the United States and the Viet Cong," appeared in the December 18 issue of *Newsweek*.

⁴ In this statement, Goldberg said that the NLF inquired about sending public spokesmen and not diplomats to the United Nations in September; since that time, the U.S. Government had not opposed NLF representatives coming before the General Assembly on "official business" but did not want such a visit to turn into a propaganda campaign. See *The New York Times*, December 8, 1967.

GVN observer there. I summarized the main points made by Goldberg to Chi, as reported in USUN 2934.⁵

4. Thieu asked my opinion as to the probability of any action being taken by the Security Council. I said that I thought it was unlikely that there would be any Security Council action since the Soviets appeared still to be opposed to UN consideration of the Vietnam question. I pointed out, however, that the Mansfield resolution required that we explore this question very carefully and that we were engaged in doing this. During this discussion I noted that Hanoi Radio had reported an NLF denial that there had been any attempt to send representatives to the UN and called attention to U Thant's statements about this.⁶

Bunker

⁵ According to telegram 2934 from the USUN, December 11, Goldberg informed Chi, the GVN observer at the United Nations, of the U.S. Government's intention to first consult other members of the Security Council before proceeding on the matter of letting the NLF go before the international body. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET/UN) In a December 14 document circulated by the Romanian delegation to various other UN delegations, the NLF put forth a platform statement calling for the establishment of a coalition government and the holding of "free elections" in South Vietnam, economic and land reform, and eventual reunification with North Vietnam. In response, Goldberg noted that the new document did not alter the opposition of the Vietnamese Communists toward the prospect of settlement within the framework of the United Nations. See *The New York Times*, December 15, 1967, and *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1967, pp. 1042–1043.

⁶ Two days after the adjournment of the UNGA on December 20, USUN released a summary of actions taken during the 22d Assembly, which reads in part: "On several occasions before and during the General Assembly, the United States again consulted with other members on a possible renewal of Security Council consideration of Vietnam. Such consultations were held during the Tet bombing pause in January 1967; shortly before the Assembly met for its regular session; and in December, following the Senate's passage of the Mansfield resolution. On none of these occasions did we find any change of attitude by those opposing United Nations involvement." See Department of State *Bulletin*, February 5, 1968, pp. 181–182.

436. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, December 13, 1967, 1215Z.

13288. For the President from Bunker. Herewith my thirty-first weekly message:

A. General

1. The past week has been marked by an intensification of military activity throughout the country; by progress of both houses of the Assembly in organization, the Senate having completed approval of its rules; by apprehension and sensitivity on the part of the public, press and officials concerning the US attitude and intentions toward the NLF; and by continued progress in the GVN priority programs.

2. RVNAF and free world forces have given a good account of themselves and the Communists have suffered a series of heavy military setbacks in the past week. Performance of RVNAF has been a further encouraging demonstration of the improvement in the quality of these forces. They have more than held up their end.

3. The Senate having completed approval of its rules and regulations is expected to elect officers this week, to proceed with the formation of committees and should soon get down to serious work. The house has lagged behind but is making steady though slower progress.

4. Sensitivity about US relations with the NLF was heightened by the report of the arrest of an NLF emissary, by the false newspaper accounts that high officials of the Embassy had been in contact with NLF representatives in Saigon, and by reports on the possibility of NLF representatives coming to New York. In my talk with President Thieu on December 6² I called his attention to these unfounded and false statements in the press, to widespread editorial comment based on false assumptions and my very definite feeling that some GVN officials were in part responsible for the rumors. I added that I knew it was not necessary to assure him that no consultations would be undertaken with the NLF without full consultation with his government. I said that I thought that a statement by the GVN to allay these false reports, which could only be damaging to our relations, would be in order. Forthright

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Immediate; Nodis. Received at 9:45 a.m. Rostow sent a copy of this telegram to the President under cover of a note of December 14. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 8B(2)) The notation "ps" on the covering note indicates that the President saw the telegram. This telegram is printed in full in Pike, *The Bunker Papers*, pp. 259–268.

² See Document 429.

statements by Prime Minister Loc and Foreign Minister Do on the next day, December 7, and the helpful statement made by the spokesman of the Department of State on December 8th have helped to abate these suspicions. I held a press reception for Vietnamese editors on December 7, at which I made the same point, with beneficial effects in the Vietnamese language press the next day. The statement by the Department spokesman on our view of the situation at the UN and a future political structure in the South also helped to clear the air. The Vietnamese continue however to be highly sensitive about the NLF and our attitude toward it.

5. The situation of course is not helped by such things as the article in the forthcoming issue of *Newsweek* alleging that there have been increasing numbers of contacts between American and VC representatives. The substance of the story has already appeared in the Saigon newspapers. I told Thieu there was no truth in these reports and I had no idea of the sources of the allegations.

6. We have virtually completed coordination of the Christmas stand down question with the GVN, with agreement reached on a 24 hour ceasefire at Christmas and in principle on 24 and 48 hour ceasefires respectively at New Year's and Tet holidays, provided the Christmas stand down is carried out satisfactorily.³ I expect that this will be fully resolved in a few days. Foreign Minister Tran Van Do expects that the announcement can be made this week, when coordination with our other allies is completed.

7. General Westmoreland told me on December 11 that during a meeting between him and Minister of Defense Vy on December 9 the latter had said that President Thieu and General Cao Van Vien had agreed that GVN forces, in "hot pursuit" of enemy forces near the Cambodian border, should be permitted to pursue them across the border. GVN forces would not remain in Cambodia but would withdraw as soon as contact was broken or the enemy forces defeated. I discussed the matter with President Thieu on December 12, pointing out the difficult problems that the proposed GVN policy would raise for us. I rec-

³ As reported in telegram 13232 from Saigon, December 12, Bunker and Westmoreland requested that the GVN accept an 1800 December 24–1800 December 25 ceasefire period instead of a 1200–1200 one due to military considerations; in addition they deleted any reference in the cease-fire announcement (to be issued by the GVN) to "substantial logistical resupply or major troop repositioning by Free World military forces." Do saw no difficulty in the GVN's acceptance of the changes. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET S) The JCS restricted military operations for 24 hours at Christmas and New Year's and for 48 hours during Tet except in response to enemy-initiated actions. (Telegram JCS 5343 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, December 16; Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 6F 1967–1968 Holiday Cease Fires)

ommended to him that he hold in abeyance any final decisions on this policy and make no further public statements on the subject until our positions have been clarified, saying that we hoped that we might have some influence on Sihanouk and that we wanted at least to make an effort with him. Thieu said he understood our concern and agreed with what I proposed.

8. I took Senator Percy⁴ to call on President Thieu December 12. The Senator said he wished to make clear to Thieu that no responsible people in either the Democratic or the Republican Party favored U.S. withdrawal from Viet-Nam. He asked Thieu what he thought the prospects were for negotiations. Thieu replied that he felt he knew the political thinking of Hanoi pretty well and that he saw no chance of meaningful negotiations before the U.S. elections. He thought the enemy would keep up military pressures against us and try to achieve some victories which would have an impact on American opinion. Senator Percy discussed foreign support for the GVN and commented that there is a feeling in the U.S. that if other Asian nations also thought Viet-Nam was important, we would like to see a greater degree of support from them. Thieu mentioned the planned increase in Thai, Australian and New Zealand forces. Senator Percy suggested that nations such as Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Japan might do more. Thieu reviewed Japan's contribution on the non-military side and commented that the GVN would welcome any additional Asian aid that might be offered.

9. The afternoon of December 12 Senator and Mrs. Percy and their party at the Senator's insistence flew up to Dak Son in Phuoc Long Province near the Cambodian border, the unfortunate village which the Communists attacked Dec 5, killing a large number of civilians with grenades and flame throwers. While visiting there, the VC fired several mortar rounds at the town. The Percy party was unhurt, though the Senator was scratched when he dove for cover. Even though the Senator insisted on visiting Dak Son I think we should not have permitted him to go and we are tightening up our procedures. I'm sure he doesn't have to be told that those Communists out there are not "peaceful agrarian reformers," as some of our critics would have us believe.

[Here follows discussion of priority programs for 1968, including mobilization measures, military and civilian administrative reorganization, pacification, economic stabilization, the peace effort, and land reform, as well as a general discussion of other political, economic, and military matters.]

Bunker

⁴ Senator Charles Percy (R-IL).

437. Telegram From the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker) to the President's Special Assistant (Rostow), Secretary of State Rusk, Secretary of Defense McNamara, and Director of Central Intelligence Helms¹

Saigon, December 15, 1967, 0859Z.

CAS 308. In my meeting with President Thieu on December 12th I expressed my appreciation for his agreement to the release of Sau Ha and Mai Thi Vang. Referring to the disclosure of information on the Buttercup case by General Loan and his apparent desire to see these efforts come to naught, I said that despite our skepticism we need to pursue this case not only in the interests of freeing prisoners of war but also to see if there are any cracks or fissures in the NLF which we can exploit. This is extremely important to both the GVN and to the U.S. Government; in fact it might be worth several victories on the battlefield for both of us.

In response, President Thieu discussed the situation concerning General Loan and his remarks are reported in Saigon Embtel 13292.²

In my meeting with President Thieu on 13 December, I told Thieu that we hoped to launch Sau Ha and Mai Thi Vang with Buttercup/2 by the weekend of December 16–18. The President expressed no objection to this schedule.

I also advised him that I thought it was important, particularly in view of the difficulties we had had with General Loan in this case, for me to bring Vice President Ky up to date in the near future. President Thieu replied that the Vice President was generally aware of developments and suggested that I cover the matter with the Vice President on the first occasion when I have other subjects to review with him. I intend to accomplish this at the earliest opportunity.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–7 VIET S/BUTTERCUP. Secret; Immediate; Nodis; Buttercup; Exclusive; Via CAS Channels.

² Dated December 13. (Ibid.)

438. Telegram From the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker) to the President's Special Assistant (Rostow), Secretary of State Rusk, Secretary of Defense McNamara, and Director of Central Intelligence Helms¹

Saigon, December 15, 1967, 0742Z.

CAS 309. 1. Our next message to be carried by courier Tong to Buttercup/1 was cleared with the GVN on 13 December. *Text follows:*

"As we have sought to communicate to you by radio on a number of occasions, Mr. Tong returned safely and conveyed your message to us on 26 October. Since then events have occurred which seemed to endanger hopes for achieving a satisfactory basis for a prisoner exchange. Restraint shown in the face of these events, however, encourages us to believe these difficulties will be overcome, given continued goodwill on both sides.

"Senior officials on our side have deliberated carefully over the message conveyed to us by Mr. Tong and have arrived at a decision. This decision is to release and return to you, under Mr. Tong's escort, Mr. Sau Ha, and provide improved treatment for other persons named by you. The question of the release of other prisoners was a major subject of our deliberations. The decision was to release Madame Mai Thi Vang, although you had not requested it, along with Sau Ha as a demonstration of our goodwill and interest in the matter of prisoner exchange. The viewpoint which prevailed during our deliberations is that other prisoners will be released when you have given a more substantial indication of your willingness to release some prisoners on your side than you have indicated in the message conveyed by Mr. Tong. This indication could be given most expeditiously through the radio link which has been established between us. Your mentioning the names of the prisoners you would release would be helpful. To obtain your reply, we will monitor this link on the scheduled dates and times.

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–7 VIET S/BUTTERCUP. Secret; Immediate; Nodis; Buttercup; Exclusive; Via CAS Channels. In a covering memorandum transmitting a copy of the telegram to the President, Rostow wrote: "The latest Buttercup report is as follows: 1. The attached message was cleared by the government of Vietnam (GVN) to be passed back to [less than 1 line of source text not declassified], the NLF official who originated the message to us. 2. The GVN agreed on 16 December as the date for launching Sau Ha, Mai Thi Vang, and Buttercup/2 (the bearer of [less than 1 line of source text not declassified]'s message). Sau Ha and Mai Thi Vang (Mrs. [less than 1 line of source text not declassified]) were to be handed over to American custody on December 15 (today). The latest message does not report the actual transfer. In short, if nothing goes wrong, the countermove will be initiated this week end." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Buttercup Vol. I (A))

We would then respond with a transmission notifying you of the dates we will release the other prisoners. Ensuing procedural steps for the transfer of prisoners could be arranged most efficiently through use of the radio link. As an alternate means of communication, you may of course continue to use Mr. Tong as your intermediary.

"We trust you will see in our above actions a convincing demonstration of our intent to achieve a satisfactory basis for a prisoner exchange. We hope that this contact with you will permit us to work out arrangements for a continuing exchange of prisoners, and also serve as a useful background to the examination of the broader political topics reviewed in your message." *End of text.*

2. Colonel Huan told [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] on 13 December that Minister Vien "does not object" to our proposed message, but does not wish to be quoted as "agreeing to it" or "approving it." Huan indicated that Vien's feelings are that, as long as Americans observe GVN policy which opposes contact, direct or indirect, with the NLF in the text of messages sent to the NLF, the GVN "will not object to the messages."

3. Huan stated that Vien feels our projected launch date of 16–17 December is "too soon," and Vien needs more time to prepare the people involved in the release of Mai Thi Vang, specifically General Loan. When [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] pointed out, as in previous conversations with Huan, that, in the American view, to delay much beyond the end of this week will be to take the rather serious risk that the NLF will despair of our responding and elect to proceed with the propaganda exploitation of the Buttercup case, Huan suggested that the [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] "speak to Vien to accelerate the launch date and present all of the arguments in favor of moving ahead soon on the operation." Huan feels that Vien will understandably procrastinate, but that [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] discussion with Vien may facilitate his coming to grips with problem sooner than he might otherwise and making the moves and decisions involved to get the operation launched. Huan suggested that it is most important for the Americans to be prepared to discuss specifically the American response to an NLF propaganda exploitation of the Buttercup case.²

² According to CAS telegram 325 from Saigon, Sau Ha, Tong, and Mai Thi Vang were remanded to officials of the CIA Station in Saigon on December 15. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–7 VIET S/BUTTERCUP) In CAS telegram 447 from Saigon, December 20, Bunker reported that officers of the U.S. Army's 25th Division launched the group on its journey on December 19, although without Mai Thi Vang, who was too debilitated by the rigors of her captivity under the GVN to travel. (Ibid.)

439. Editorial Note

On December 15, 1967, the JASON Division of the Institute of Defense Analysis, a Washington-based policy analysis center closely associated with the Pentagon, submitted to Secretary of Defense McNamara an assessment of the effectiveness of the bombing campaign in the war effort. In a highly critical account, the JASON report argued that the impact of the bombing campaign upon the enemy's ability to wage war in South Vietnam was negligible. The bombing had mixed results in terms of meeting the three objectives previously outlined by McNamara: the interdiction of men and arms flowing southward, boosting the morale of the South Vietnamese Government, and compelling Hanoi to pay a high price to continue its military struggle. The study's conclusions relating to the first objective read:

"As of October 1967, the U.S. bombing has had no measurable effect upon Hanoi's ability to mount and support military operations in the South. North Vietnam supports operations in the South mainly by functioning as a logistical funnel and providing a source of manpower, from an economy in which manpower has been widely under-utilized. Most of the essential military supplies that the VC/NVA forces in the South require from external sources are provided by the USSR, Eastern Europe, and Communist China. Furthermore, the volume of such supplies is so low that only a small fraction of the capacity of North Vietnam is required to maintain that flow."

The study added that although the North Vietnamese economy was heavily damaged, infiltration southward had increased during the years of the bombing campaign. While virtually all targets of military and economic significance had been attacked, the North Vietnamese had managed to build a stronger military force and to continue economic activity at sufficient levels.

Nor had the other two objectives been met successfully, the reported asserted. While South Vietnamese morale had been bolstered initially by the bombing, this effect declined as the bombing became more routine. On the third objective, the JASON study offered a similarly pessimistic analysis:

"The bombing campaign against NVN has not discernibly weakened the determination of the North Vietnamese leaders to continue to direct and support the insurgency in the South. Shortages of food and clothing, travel restrictions, separations of families, lack of adequate medical and educational facilities, and heavy work loads have tended to affect adversely civilian morale. However, there are few if any reliable reports on a breakdown of the commitment of the people to support the war. Unlike the situation in the South, there are no reports of marked increases of absenteeism, draft dodging, black market operations or prostitution. There is no evidence that possible war weariness among the people has shaken the leadership's belief that they can continue to en-

dure the bombing and outlast the U.S. and SVN in a protracted war of attrition.”

Although the study examined nine different ways to improve the effectiveness of air power, its authors could determine no way in which to reduce North Vietnamese infiltration into South Vietnam. The final version of the report was revised and submitted to McNamara, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Commander in Chief of Pacific Forces on January 3, 1968. The JASON study is excerpted in U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services, *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 6, Volume II, pages 122–127.

440. Information Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, December 16, 1967, 3:15 p.m.

SUBJECT

Are the Next Four Months Decisive?

I asked Saigon to collect and analyze all the captured documents they have on the present winter–spring offensive and negotiations, including the coalition government.

They did a good, long paper.²

I then asked CIA to reproduce it and comment on it. The comment and the Saigon paper are attached.³

Taken together, they reveal an interesting difference of emphasis and judgment between Saigon and CIA Washington.

The Saigon people read these documents as saying (see p. II, 5–8, paper clipped):

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Walt Rostow, Vol. 54 (1 of 2). Secret. The notation “ps” on the memorandum indicates that the President saw it.

² Attached but not printed were three papers that constituted the assessment: “Overview of Viet Cong Strategy,” “The Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Winter–Spring Campaign,” and “The Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Position on Coalition Government,” all dated December 8 but originally submitted to MACV on November 27.

³ Carver’s December 15 commentary is attached but not printed; it is summarized below.

- the Communists are simultaneously making a maximum military effort and preparing their people for an early negotiation;
- if they achieve some tactical success, they are likely to negotiate in the late winter or spring;
- if they do not, they are likely to scale down the war;
- “the war is probably nearing a turning point and the outcome of the 1967–68 winter–spring campaign will in all likelihood determine the future direction of the war.”⁴

Our CIA people (as you can see in the marked passages of the covering note) are inclined to believe the present military campaign, combined with emphasis on a negotiated coalition government, is less “decisive” than Saigon. They see the war going on for several years.

At the end, however, they accept an important point: having gotten the Viet Cong to accept these months as “decisive” and moving towards peace and victory “this situation could have serious effects on Viet Cong morale and lead to a substantial increase in defections” if the campaign fails.

In any case, I thought you’d like to know the terms in which experts are debating the present evidence.

Walt

⁴ In the attached paper entitled “The Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Winter–Spring Campaign,” [text not declassified] of the Saigon CIA Station argued that based upon captured enemy documents, the North Vietnamese and the VC hoped to force re-deployment of U.S. forces near the border areas in order to weaken the cities wherein a “general uprising” was envisioned. The effort was considered “decisive” by the Communist hierarchy as it sought to take advantage of political dissent within the United States during the ensuing election year. Specific captured documents generated by the Combined Document Exploitation Center upon which the Saigon Station’s assessment was predicated are in the Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Vietnam 1967 Winter–Spring Campaign.

441. Memorandum for the File by President Johnson¹

Washington, December 18, 1967, 1:40 p.m.

The memorandum of Secretary McNamara dated November 1, 1967, attached hereto,² raises fundamental questions of policy with reference to the conduct of the war in Vietnam.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Walt Rostow, Vietnam, Conduct of War. No classification marking. An attached note to Rostow reads: “The President asks that you read the attached *very carefully* for him.”

² Document 375.

I have read it, and studied it, with the utmost care. In addition, I have asked certain advisers to give their written reactions to the memo. These reactions are attached.³

I have consulted at length with Ambassador Bunker and General Westmoreland on their recent trip to Washington.

At my suggestion, a group of senior advisers attended a lengthy briefing at the State Department and then met for a full discussion with me.⁴

I have carefully considered the questions presented and the individual views expressed, and I have reached the following conclusions:

With respect to bombing North Vietnam, I would wish for us to:

—authorize and strike those remaining targets which, after study, we judge to have significant military content but which would not involve excessive civilian casualties; excessive U.S. losses; or substantial increased risk of engaging the USSR or Communist China in the war;

—maintain on a routine basis a restrike program for major targets throughout North Vietnam;

—strive to remove the drama and public attention given to our North Vietnamese bombing operations.

I have concluded that, under present circumstances, a unilateral and unrequited bombing stand-down would be read in both Hanoi and the United States as a sign of weakening will. It would encourage the extreme doves; increase the pressure for withdrawal from those who argue “bomb or get out”; decrease support from our most steady friends; and pick up support from only a small group of moderate doves.

I would not, of course, rule out playing our bombing card under circumstances where there is reason for confidence that it would move us towards peace. But with the failure of the Paris track and the opening of Buttercup—at a time when the North is being bombed—I do not believe we should move from our present policy unless hard evidence suggests such a change would be profitable.⁵

With respect to operations on the ground, I do not believe we should announce a so called policy of stabilization. An announced change would have, in my judgment, some of the political effects in Hanoi and in the United States of a unilateral bombing stand-down.

³ See Documents 378, 381, 387, 388, 403, and 410.

⁴ See Document 377.

⁵ In a televised interview on December 19, the President stated that the war could end “within a matter of days” if the Vietnamese Communists accepted Thieu’s offer of informal talks, abided by the Geneva Accords of 1954 and 1962, ceased infiltration into Laos, respected the DMZ, and committed to democratic government in South Vietnam. The interview is printed in full in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1967*, Book II, pp. 1158–1173.

On the other hand, at the moment I see no basis for increasing U. S. forces above the current approved level.

As for the movement of U.S. forces across the frontiers of South Vietnam, I am inclined to be extremely reserved unless a powerful case can be made. There are two reasons: the political risks involved, and the diversion of forces from pressure on the VC and from all the other dimensions of pacification. But I believe it unwise to announce a policy that would deny us these options.

The third recommendation of Secretary McNamara has merit. I agree that we should review the conduct of military operations in South Vietnam with a view to reducing U. S. casualties, accelerating the turnover of responsibility to the GVN, and working toward less destruction and fewer casualties in South Vietnam.

Lyndon B. Johnson

442. Editorial Note

On December 19, 1967, President Johnson began an international trip with the primary purpose of attending the memorial services for Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt (who disappeared while swimming on December 17). The President arrived in Australia on December 21. That morning, from 11:13 a.m. to 12:03 p.m., he discussed the war in Southeast Asia with Prime Minister John McEwen and other senior Australian Government officials. According to notes taken by Presidential aide George Christian, during the conversation the President assessed the enemy's plans for the immediate future:

"Hanoi, thinking of the French, is testing the will of the U.S. and its allies. He believes they will wait until after the U.S. election. In the meanwhile, we must maintain our posture; not widen the war; not cut and run. We must avoid flirting with either extreme, and keep the pressure on. The President said that he felt that Hanoi was under extreme pressure to achieve some tactical victory. Northern forces were being infiltrated into the South. He foresaw kamikaze attacks in the months ahead. That is one reason why he is pressing so hard for additional allied manpower. The President foresaw a sequence in which we maintain pressure without widening the war; imposed upon North Vietnamese increased losses; and then in time they would have to decide what to do in the face of the high cost and the continued frustration of their objective. Then, he believed, they would talk." (Meeting of the President with the Australian Cabinet, 11:13 a.m., December 21; Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, March 19,

1970 Memo; the full text of the notes is printed in *Foreign Relations*, 1964–1968, volume XXVII, Document 35.)

The President also used the occasion to meet with a number of other Asian leaders who had come to Australia, including President Nguyen Van Thieu of South Vietnam, with whom he dined on December 21 from 8:14 p.m. through 10:04 p.m. (Johnson Library, President's Daily Diary) While no notes of the Johnson–Thieu meeting have been found, in telegram CAP 671170 to Ambassador Bunker in Saigon, December 27, Walt Rostow described the main points covered by the two leaders as “not permitting domestic political forces in each country to pull the two Presidents apart” and initiating a “Vietnamese priority program” of various domestic political, agrarian, and economic reforms. (Ibid., National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, I E (1), Post Inaugural Political Activity) In addition, during a December 18 telephone conversation, the President mentioned to Senator Mike Mansfield that he would tell Thieu “that this thing is so rough in this country that if he doesn't take these steps that Bunker's trying to shove on him, namely with the Viet Cong and others that can form a coalition and some of things we're working on, that this is just too rough, and he's just got to do it. Bunker's been unable to shove him yet and they think maybe that I could let him see the urgency of it pretty strong.” (Ibid., Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of Telephone Conversation Between Johnson and Mansfield, December 18, 1967, 8:55 a.m., Tape F67.15, Side A, PNO 3)

In telegram 14445 from Saigon, December 27, Bunker reported on a discussion that he and Thieu later had regarding Thieu's meeting with Johnson: “He noted that President Johnson had been interested particularly in plans for land reform, raising of taxes, progress in pacification, and the development of the joint U.S./Japanese educational TV project. Thieu said he described his plans on land reform to the President. These include a comprehensive land reform plan on which the GVN has been working, which Thieu expects to discuss in detail this week with the Minister of Agriculture, and which they hope will form the basis for substantial progress in the field. Thieu said he had also explained to the President the political factors bearing on the timing of any increase in taxes, noting particularly the inadvisability of such a move before the Tet holidays, especially with the normal upward pressure on prices generally during this period. . . . Thieu also said he had assured the President that the GVN was making every effort to move ahead on the new pacification plan and that he anticipated more rapid progress in the months ahead.” (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL US–VIET S)

After their discussion in Australia, Johnson and Thieu issued a joint communiqué calling for national reconciliation and the right of

self-determination in Vietnam and assuring a willingness on the part of the South Vietnamese Government to talk to individual members of the NLF (although the organization as a whole would never be recognized nor dealt with on an official level). Also in the communiqué, the leaders expressed regret that the North Vietnamese had refused to follow up on any of the peace overtures made to them and “agreed that in these circumstances there was no alternative to continuing appropriate military actions.” For the full text, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1967, pages 1046–1047.

Immediately following the memorial for Holt on December 22, the President flew to Khorat air base in Thailand. There, in the early hours of the next morning, he decorated several combat pilots and praised American steadfastness in pursuing the “just” cause in Vietnam. He then flew to Cam Ranh Bay in South Vietnam on a visit that Ambassador Bunker believed would “give great boost to morale of all here.” (Telegram CAS 402 from Bunker to Walt Rostow, December 19; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 84, Files of Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, Book 4–Vietnam Telegram Chrono.) The President reviewed troops along with Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker and General William Westmoreland and presented medals and ribbons to numerous soldiers and commanders. In his informal remarks to the assembled servicemen, he promised, “We’re not going to yield and we’re not going to shimmy” while adding that the enemy had met its master and the American people were firmly behind the war effort. For the full text of the remarks of the President to the troops, see Department of State *Bulletin*, January 15, 1968, pages 73–76.

Johnson left Vietnam by 10:30 a.m. en route for Rome and a meeting with Pope Paul VI. Arriving in Rome by way of Pakistan on December 23, the President met with the Pope at the Vatican later that evening. At the meeting Johnson noted his opposition to a unilateral pause, although he was prepared to halt bombing if he could obtain acceptable guarantees from North Vietnam. He also discussed the plight of U.S. prisoners of war held by the enemy. In turn, the Pope personally requested an extension of the New Year’s truce. For an account of the meeting, see *Foreign Relations*, 1964–1968, volume XII, Document 310. The meeting was also reported to Bunker by Rostow in telegram CAP 671171, December 27. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Walt Rostow, Memos to the President, Vol. 55 [2 of 2]) For the President’s public statement relating to his meeting with the Pope, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1967, pages 1048–1049. For text of the aide-mémoire that the President gave the Pope after their meeting, see *Foreign Relations*, 1964–1968, volume XII, Document 309. The Pope issued a public statement calling for a true commitment to peace. See *The New York Times*, December 24, 1967. On December 24 the President recorded a Christmas message to the public which detailed

his trip to Asia and the Vatican. For its text, see *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1967*, Book II, pages 1190–1191.

443. Editorial Note

Direct warnings of an upcoming major offensive by the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong were transmitted in messages sent by General William Westmoreland, Commander of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, to General Earle Wheeler, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In telegram MAC 11956, December 19, 1967, Westmoreland argued that the enemy would attack along the border areas “so that he can launch major attacks against SVN to gain a psychological and political victory, while at the same time retaining the best hope of disengaging when defeated.” In a message dispatched the next day, Westmoreland made the case that the concentration and effectiveness of his troops near the borders had compelled the leadership in Hanoi “to undertake an intensified country-wide effort, perhaps a maximum effort, over a relatively short period.” He also noted that enemy forces in other areas of the country had been weakened and he did not propose any counter-measures against them since it was likely that any attack in the lowlands would be of a diversionary nature. (Johnson Library, National Security File, Files of Walt Rostow, Material re Vietnam and Pueblo, Jan–Feb 1968) For an assessment of these messages, see James J. Wirtz, *The Tet Offensive: Intelligence Failure in War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), pages 186–190.

As a result, Westmoreland’s strategy was to concentrate on defending the outposts in the area around Khe Sanh in Quang Tri Province. He had correctly assessed North Vietnamese and Viet Cong strategy for a “General Uprising” but was unaware that the enemy planned to use its forces to attack Khe Sanh and to liberate Hue and Danang after breaking through U.S. lines. By confronting the North Vietnamese regular forces at Khe Sanh, Westmoreland would prevent them from becoming the second wave of the Tet Offensive. See Ronnie E. Ford, *Tet 1968: Understanding the Surprise* (London: Frank Cass, 1995), pages 192–193. For additional discussion of Westmoreland’s prediction, see Samuel Zaffiri, *Westmoreland: A Biography of General William C. Westmoreland* (New York: William Morrow, 1994), and William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1976).

444. Memorandum From the President's Special Consultant (Taylor) to President Johnson¹

Washington, December 26, 1967.

SUBJECT

A Coalition Proposal from the Viet Cong

There are many signs indicating that during the coming months we may have to consider seriously the proposition of a political settlement in Viet-Nam based on some kind of coalition government. It is not clear what form such a proposal may take but the *New York Times* editorial of December 24² is an example of what it might be. While we are informally on the record as opposing a coalition government, I think that we should be considering what variations of this theme we may encounter and how best to respond to an overture under conditions when there is sure to be a great clamor for a quick, affirmative reply and impatience over any delay to look for booby traps.

Since a coalition government is only one way to provide a political role for the Viet Cong in postwar South Viet-Nam, it should be considered along side other alternatives which are within the bounds of feasibility. Starting with the coalition concept in its most unattractive form, there are at least four formulas which need to be taken into account.

a. Abolish the new constitution and the recently elected government in South Viet-Nam. Choose up sides again under some agreed formula, probably under some sort of international supervision, assigning certain government positions to the Viet Cong, the others to non-Communists (probably excluding Thieu, Ky and their principal associates). General elections to be held later under ground rules established by the coalition government. Just what is happening to the war in this period is not clear. The *Times* editorial indicates that the coalition government would restore peace prior to the elections.

b. As a result of negotiations and following a cease-fire, hold a new general election under international supervision. NLF to participate as a party in the election and to join the ensuing coalition government as a bloc in numbers based on the outcome of the election.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, 8I, Taylor Memos (2 of 2). Secret. In an attached covering note to Rostow, December 26, Taylor wrote: "Walt, I would appreciate an opportunity to discuss this with you."

² The editorial asserted that military victory was unachievable and that a settlement involving a temporary coalition government would be in line with U.S. war aims. See *The New York Times*, December 24, 1967.

c. Reject the concept of a coalition government on the ground that it is the historic Communist ploy to bring government to a standstill and to prepare an eventual Communist takeover. Counter with the offer of a special general election held one year after the termination of hostilities during which time repentant Viet Cong receive amnesty and economic assistance in establishing themselves in South Vietnamese society. These rehabilitated Viet Cong to be permitted to participate as a party in the election if they desire. Whatever they can win by the ballot will be theirs.

d. Same as c but with any Communist party barred from the election. Amnestied Viet Cong to be permitted to participate as individuals but not as a political party.

Any initial Communist offer will probably be something like a. They may regard b as a possible fall-back position to be taken only under extreme duress.

From the U.S. point of view, either a or b should be viewed as a sell-out and a strong case prepared for public use setting forth the reasons why both are unacceptable. Alternative c looks to me like the preferred solution from our point of view and one susceptible of a strong public defense. However, it is not likely to receive ready acceptance by the South Vietnamese who are afraid to take on the cohesive and disciplined Viet Cong in a political campaign because of their sense of weakness in their own ranks arising from internal divisions.

Thus, the South Vietnamese will not want to go beyond alternative d and it will take some doing on the part of our representatives in Saigon to soften their position. But I believe that it is essential to do so if we are to be able to defend our case before U.S. and international opinion. It simply will not do for our Vietnamese allies to stymie a reasonable political settlement on the ground that they are afraid to contest a Communist minority party of less than 20 percent in a free election.

I am submitting this memorandum from a feeling of concern that, as a government, we have not made up our minds as to how to respond to a Communist overture directed at a coalition government and have not concerted adequately with our Vietnamese allies. (I am not aware of what may have taken place during your recent trip which bears on this matter.) We need to know what political formula we would prefer (or at least would accept), prepare public opinion for the rejection of such alternatives as a and b, and get a concurrence from Saigon to a proposition which we could jointly espouse.

If such work is going on at the present time, I have no knowledge of it. I am always afraid of a tendency to delay our preparations until we have the Communist proposition on the table in front of us. Then

we are committed to a defensive response which abandons all the advantages inherent in the initiative.

M. D. T.

445. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, December 28, 1967, 0945Z.

14540. Ref: State 90178.²

1. I discussed reftel with General Abrams, who is acting in General Westmoreland's absence, and he said that he saw no serious military problems that would be raised by an extension of 12 hours on the New Year's truce, i.e., until 0600 hours January 2 Saigon time. Both General Abrams and I believe it would not be desirable, either militarily or politically, to seek an extension beyond this hour as suggested in para 4 reftel.³

2. Subsequent to my talk with Abrams, I took the matter up urgently with President Thieu. He saw no major problems with the proposal and said that he would instruct the Acting Foreign Minister to check with the other troop-contributing countries. Since there is a Cabinet meeting today chaired by President Thieu which will run into the evening hours here, it is doubtful that Acting Foreign Minister Lam can initiate this check before December 29.

3. As to the manner of handling such an extension, the language of the GVN announcement issued before the Christmas truce (Saigon 13232 and 12975)⁴ would make it difficult for the GVN to wait until

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 27-14 VIET. Secret; Immediate; Nodis. Received at 5:52 a.m.

² In telegram 90178 to Saigon, December 28, the Department advised the Embassy of the Pope's request for a New Year's truce extension. The GVN accepted the extension. The truce then would run from 6 p.m. on December 31 to 6 a.m. on January 2, 1968 (Saigon time). In order to prevent the enemy from "taking advantage" of the cease-fire, the extension would not be announced until after it had commenced. (Ibid.)

³ This paragraph reads: "Would your problems be materially increased if the truce period were extended by an additional 6 to 12 hours beyond 0600 January 2 Saigon time to permit expiration of January 1 day of prayer throughout the U.S. prior to resumption of hostilities."

⁴ For telegram 13232 from Saigon, December 13, see footnote 3, Document 436. Telegram 12975, December 8, is in the National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 27-14 VIET.

the truce comes into effect before announcing the extension. As Department will recall, announcement provided that any extension of the truce would be a matter for agreement between GVN and NVN representatives. GVN will therefore wish to make any announcement of an extended truce prior to the time it comes into effect. Thieu thought there were two possible ways of handling it. The easier way would be if the Pope could request the GVN directly to extend the truce for this period, which would allow the GVN to act without any difficulty. If this were not feasible, a second way to handle it would be simply to say that the extension was decided on in order to give the forces a further respite. Thieu commented that this would be customary, noting that at Tet, for instance, any truce shorter than 48 hours would be meaningless.

4. Department will be able to judge whether it is feasible to have the Pope send such a message urgently to President Thieu. If not, I suggest that we use the general line recommended by Thieu and refuse to elaborate on it further. We are already receiving queries about when the announcement of the New Year's truce will be made. We will for the present merely say that we have no information, noting that the eventual announcement will be made by the GVN.

Bunker

446. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, December 28, 1967, 1200Z.

14556. For the President from Bunker. Herewith my thirty-second weekly message:

A. General

1. The twenty-four hour Christmas stand-down brought momentary respite to this beleaguered country and, in major urban centers at least, there was a genuine holiday atmosphere despite the immediate prospect of renewed hostilities. Your visit to Cam Ranh on December 23rd was an encouragement to all of us; that you should have added many thousands of miles to your journey to come here and to speak

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Immediate; Nodis. Received at 10:32 a.m. This telegram is printed in full in Pike, *The Bunker Papers*, pp. 269–276.

generous words of appreciation and support has been an inspiration to all of us who are engaged in this great task on the soil of Viet-Nam. And your working session with President Thieu and other free world leaders in Canberra served to reassure the Vietnamese of our commitment here.² Public expressions of concern that we may be unilaterally changing our posture vis-à-vis the NLF have measurably diminished.

2. While your December 19 interview with three major television networks³ at first was interpreted in some local political circles as an indication of differences between ourselves and the GVN on the subject of NLF recognition, when President Thieu returned to Saigon on December 24, he reassured the press that there were no differences of view between us and the Vietnamese on this subject; Thieu emphasized that while the GVN would not recognize the NLF as an organization he reiterated his willingness to “listen” to anyone who wants to come in from the other side. Thieu added that the policy of Viet-Nam and its allies remains the same as elaborated in the 1966 Manila communiqué.

3. In my talk with President Thieu day before yesterday he expressed his pleasure at the opportunity to talk with you in Canberra and said that from his viewpoint he thought that the meetings had been very worthwhile. Having in mind the growing impression that the new GVN was not giving much public indication of progress, I stressed to him the need for action and leadership; that I sensed an air of expectancy among the people who were waiting and hoping that the new government would move ahead. I suggested to him that it might be timely for him to make some kind of public statement of government actions and intentions, follow up on his fine inaugural address and Prime Minister Loc’s summary of government plans and programs. I was happy to have him say that he was already working on a major address which he planned to make to a joint session of both houses when he would present the budget for the coming year. In it he would deal with the principal problems facing the nation and the government’s planned actions to meet them. Thieu mentioned that you had expressed particular interest in the GVN’s plans for land reform, raising of taxes, progress in pacification, and the development of the joint US/Japanese educational TV project. Thieu said that as he had told me previously the Minister of Agriculture was working on a comprehensive land reform program and that he expected to bring this up for consideration at the Council of Ministers’ meeting at which he will preside today. He repeated again that he was aware of the need to increase taxes but noted the inadvisability of such a move before the Tet holi-

² See Document 442.

³ See footnote 5, Document 441.

days in view of the upward pressure on prices generally during this period. He expressed confidence that the pacification program could be materially accelerated during the coming year.

4. As I mentioned in my last message⁴ I think that more progress is being made than appears on the surface in preparatory work in putting action programs in definitive form. But it is time to get these moving and on the road and let the people know that the government is prepared to act. Hopefully if Thieu keeps to his plan to address the joint session of the Assembly in the first week in January it will be the cue for moving ahead.

5. The Christmas stand-down lasted from 6 pm local time December 24 to 6 pm December 25. Seven free world combatants were killed and 45 wounded as a result of enemy action during the truce period. Of these casualties, 26 were U.S. (2 killed and 24 wounded). Enemy casualties were 33 killed.

6. It is difficult to make meaningful comparisons of this stand-down with previous ones on the basis of statistics, although there were more incidents and deaths this year in 24 hours than there were last year in 48 hours. As before, many incidents have been reported during the stand-down that might not have been reported during active hostilities. And a large percentage of incidents were reactions to patrol and reconnaissance activities on our part. There was no major military action during the 24 hour period nor were there any terrorist actions in Saigon. There were, however, a number of evidences of bad faith on the part of the enemy. The most flagrant of these were a mortar attack on the province capital of Bac Lieu and an attack on a CIDG camp in Phu Yen Province.

[Here follows discussion of military pursuit into Cambodia, Romney's visit, and priority measures for the GVN.]

D. Pacification

20. Attack on infrastructure. The Prime Minister has finally signed the order setting up the GVN anti-infrastructure organization along the lines I mentioned three weeks ago.⁵ This is a long awaited breakthrough and we can now move into the operational phase of this top priority

⁴ Document 436.

⁵ In telegram 12892 from Saigon, December 7, Bunker reported a "minor breakthrough" when on December 5 the GVN unveiled plans for a joint intelligence system to carry out the anti-VCI campaign. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S) Officially established on December 20, the program was termed *Phuong Huong*, which translated as "Phoenix." *Phuong Huong* was based on the U.S. counterpart program termed ICEX, which brought together CIA, MACV, and AID efforts against the VC. ICEX was developed during 1967 in order to selectively target full-time VC cadres rather than round up entire suspected hamlet populations as the army was doing in the so-called "county fair" operations. A "counterpart

program. Bob Komer has long made this a personal project and deserves full credit.⁶

[Here follows discussion of pacification planning, refugees, anti-corruption measures, planning for 1968, peace moves, and political and economic matters.]

Bunker

relationship" with the GVN had been viewed as the best means of accelerating the program. Phuong Huong consolidated the anti-VC operations of the NP, the Police Special Branch, MSS, RF/PF, Chieu Hoi, PRUs, RD teams, Census Grievance Cadre, Self-Defense Forces, and the ARVN. (Memorandum from Leonhart to Rostow, November 8; Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, I C (2))

⁶ In a conversation with Bunker and Komer, Thieu mentioned that pacification would be run at the division instead of at the corps level and outlined plans for increasing ARVN responsibility for pacification, especially in III and IV CTZ. (Memorandum for the Record by Komer, December 30; Center for Military History, Dep-CORDS/MACV Files, Komer GVN Liaison File: 1967) Komer also went to great efforts to ensure that Thieu would retain Thang despite the latter's open criticism of the corruption and inefficiency of the newly-elected regime. (Telegram CAS 359 from Saigon, December 17; Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, IE(1) Post Inaugural Political Activity) Thang eventually made good on his long-standing threat to resign from the RD Ministry in January 1968.

447. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam¹

Washington, December 28, 1967, 2115Z.

90441. Ref: Saigon 14540.²

1. Please take steps from your end by your secure communication with Clark Field to make sure that General Westmoreland concurs in extension of standdown until 0600 January 2 Saigon time. When such concurrence obtained, please flash us, and then take following actions to effect such extension.

2. Do not believe it desirable seek special message from Pope. Suggest you follow alternative approach to GVN announcement but with

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET. Secret; Immediate; Nodis. Drafted by Habib; cleared by Bundy, Walt Rostow, Read, Nitze, and Katzenbach; and approved by Rusk.

² Document 445.

reference to Pope's December 15 public appeal that New Year's Day be a "Day of Peace throughout the world." Extension by 12 hours then could be related to GVN desire to respond to His Holiness' plea, rather than referring to "respite" for troops which seems less forthcoming and convincing.

3. If it is not possible to work out foregoing formula, you should proceed as you deem desirable in arranging for announcement by GVN of 12 hour extension. Please inform us when date and form of announcement are decided.

4. Above drafted before receipt your 14564.³ We still prefer no direct approach to Pope. Hope you can persuade Thieu to hold off on seeking personal request from Pope. You could plausibly state that request from Pope might involve longer period than we believe prudent.

Rusk

³ In telegram 14564 from Saigon, December 28, Bunker reported that Thieu had instead chosen to wait for the Pope to request directly that the GVN extend the truce rather than to unilaterally declare such an extension. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET)

448. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State¹

Saigon, December 29, 1967, 1200Z.

14610. Ref: State 90441.²

1. I have met with President Thieu (who was on a field trip with General Abrams this morning) and he has agreed to the approach suggested in paragraph 2 of reftel. He will not get in touch directly with the Pope and agrees to announce the extension based on the Pope's public appeal, provided the other troop contributing countries agree. This information has been conveyed to Acting Foreign Minister Lam who will immediately call in representatives of the other five nations and request their early concurrence in a 12 hour extension. Anticipate

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Flash; Nodis. Received at 2:55 a.m.

² Document 447.

announcement can not be made before Saturday, December 30, and possibly morning December 31, depending on speed with which other governments respond.

2. Have also communicated by Flash message with General Westmoreland who has concurred with 12 hour extension. Westmoreland would prefer truce from 1200 December 31 to 2400 January 1, which he considers would come within the January 1 "Day of Peace" concept, but give the enemy less advantage since he would have fewer hours of darkness for movement. Although consultation with other powers is proceeding on basis extension to 0600 January 2, we will see if we can work out the hours desired by General Westmoreland with the GVN, if the Department so desires. Westmoreland recognizes that the matter may have progressed too far to make this modification but recommends that it be considered.³

Bunker

³ The truce was not modified, remaining confined to the original period of 6 p.m. December 31 through 6 a.m. January 1. A dramatic increase in fighting occurred in the aftermath of the cease-fire; the NVA and VC suffered their highest recorded weekly death toll of 2,968 killed in the period from December 30 through January 6.

449. **Telegram From the CIA Station in Saigon to the President's Special Assistant (Rostow), Secretary of State Rusk, Secretary of Defense McNamara, and Director of Central Intelligence Helms¹**

Saigon, December 29, 1967, 2052Z.

CAS 6462. 1. Review Buttercup files indicates need for expansion our report re briefing, preparation and first launch of Buttercup-2 and Sau Ha on 17/18 December.

2. During final briefing of B-2 evening 17 December he informed that this mission would probably be more risky than his last since there had been general step up military activity in area within triangular points of Ben Suc on east, Cu Chi on west and Dau Tien on north. With this in mind [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] proposed that:

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–7 VIET S/BUTTERCUP. Secret; Nodis; Buttercup; Exclusive; Via CAS Channels. Received at 4:45 p.m.

A) though B-2 and not Sau Ha was the emissary between us and B-1, might be prudent have Sau Ha sit in on final discussion and briefing re our response and related matters; B) Sau Ha also carry copy (Vietnamese and English language versions) of our written response to B-1 which had been photocopied, miniaturized and concealed in back cover of Vietnamese notebook small enough to be carried in shirt pocket. B-2 readily agreed, noting that on his first trip into zone he came close to getting zapped by allied artillery fire called in by spotter plane; in addition B-2 felt that given the established relationship of trust between B-1 and Sau Ha, Sau Ha's impressions, opinions, experiences and reporting would go long way towards removing any doubt in B-1's mind re objectivity and reliability of B-2 in role of intermediary.

3. Thusly both Sau Ha and B-2 carry our written response plus verbal commentary/discussion to other side. In addition being able confirm each other's statements especially re Madame B-1, one or the other, if not both, should get through with our message.

4. New subjects: A. Since departure B-2 and Sau Ha from Saigon on 18 December we have moved Madame B-1 into new safe house where she has [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] female staffer (linguist) as companion; in addition two other [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] linguists and/or [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] meet with her almost every day for general discussions which leads into elicitation session on her, her husband and family, background and their role with the Viet Cong, etc. These conversations have reaped interesting insight into her and her husband's thinking, motivation, personal problems, plans etc. B. Though unlikely it possible that we may have to move Madame B-1 along either through "disputed" area SVN or onto Cambodian soil to get her back to her side. With this in mind have locally fabricated SVN identity card plus Cambodian alien registration document either of which we will issue to her just prior to her launch. She insists that she knows no route into MR-4 and would be equally helpless in getting through to COSVN; however she did live in Phnom Penh and says she retains some Khmer language facility. C. Madame B-1 well understands that she has no "role" nor "mission" and that she is being simply released as was her old friend Sau Ha. However, whenever we find her in a receptive frame of mind we have discussed with her possible advantages of face to face secret talks between her husband and/or other responsible Viet Cong officials and a representative of U.S. Government. We have suggested that if she wishes to do so she could mention this to B-1 when she rejoins him and add that in our view these unofficial meetings could be held in a third (unspecified) country or even in SVN at a place where the U.S. could guarantee the safety and security of the Viet Cong reps; in this context she has been informed that the Dau Tien/Ben Cui region

looks close to the ideal since it is militarily quiet, VC abound in the proximity and there are no ARVN elements or GVN check points for the Viet Cong reps to concern themselves about. She has promised to relay this personally to her husband and has the personal hunch that he just might be interested when he hears of the sincerity and reliability of our side as demonstrated to her and Sau Ha.

450. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant
(Rostow) to President Johnson¹

Washington, December 29, 1967.

SUBJECT

Prisoners of War in Vietnam

Herewith a State memorandum on the prisoners of war situation and what we have been doing about it.² In summary, here is what we have done:

1. Persuaded the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) repeatedly to

—call Hanoi's attention to its obligations under the Geneva Convention;

—request lists of prisoners;

—request improved mail facilities;

—request right to visit prisoners.

2. Persuaded the UAR to offer itself as the Protecting Power for our prisoners in Vietnam. Hanoi refused.

3. Persuaded the ICRC to offer itself as substitute Protecting Power. Hanoi refused.

¹ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Memos to the President, Walt Rostow, Vol. 55 (1 of 2). Secret.

² Not printed. A number of "displays" of U.S. "war criminals" were arranged and statements about potentially convening war crimes trials were made by the North Vietnamese during June and July 1966. The official assertions that such trials would take place ended after the President's news conference of July 20, 1966, when he implied that strong action would take place in the carefully worded statement: "I think that the people of this country and the peaceful people of the world would find this action very revolting and repulsive, and would react accordingly." See *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1966*, Book II, p. 745.

4. Generated storm of official, press and public protests when Hanoi announced its intention to try American pilots as war criminals. Ho Chi Minh publicly set the trials aside and stated that the prisoners would be humanely treated.³

5. We have also generated a good deal of pressure protesting the Hanoi practice in late 1966 and early 1967 of pressuring our prisoners to make public statements criticizing our actions and sympathizing with the North Vietnamese. As a result, these statements have stopped and Hanoi has permitted selected prisoners to be interviewed by journalists and other travelers.

6. We continue to press for better mail facilities (80 letters a week going forward through the ICRC with no indication that they are being delivered to the prisoners—and Christmas packages from the American Red Cross, all of which were returned).

7. We have put great effort into ensuring that the GVN treatment of prisoners meets all the requirements, thus focussing world humanitarian concern for the welfare of prisoners on Hanoi and the VC.

8. We continue to keep the record clear that we are interested in a prisoner exchange (the Manila Communiqué, the White House statement of July 17,⁴ and the actual release of North Vietnamese prisoners last February).⁵ We are now attempting to arrange a further release of some sick and wounded prisoners in GVN hands.

9. We responded to the few prisoners released by the VC (nine in two years) by getting the GVN to make reciprocal releases.

10. We are also encouraging U.S. commanders in Vietnam to try to arrange battlefield exchanges, but so far without success.

11. Finally, the Pope's assistance has been enlisted through your appeal to him last week.⁶

W. W. Rostow⁷

³ Not found.

⁴ The statement called on the NLF and the DRV to treat American prisoners humanely and invited prisoner exchanges. See *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1967*, Book II, p. 702.

⁵ Two North Vietnamese sailors were released from a group captured during a July 31, 1966, naval attack and subsequently held at Danang.

⁶ See Document 442.

⁷ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

451. Editorial Note

On December 29, 1967, North Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh issued a statement that seemed to refine earlier official remarks and that categorically affirmed the single condition under which his government would enter into discussions on peace in Vietnam. The key paragraph of Trinh's statement reads:

"The U.S. Government constantly leads public opinion to believe that it wants to talk to Hanoi but receives no reply. If the U.S. Government really wants to talk, then, as clearly stated in our 28 January 1967 declaration, the U.S. must first of all unconditionally end the bombing and all other acts of war against the DRV. After the U.S. unconditionally ends the bombing and all other acts of war against the DRV, the DRV will talk to the U.S. about the problems concerned."

The statement was made during a reception for a visiting official delegation from Mongolia to North Vietnam but was not released publicly until broadcast on Radio Hanoi on January 1, 1968. For full text of the statement, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1967*, pages 1055–1057.

The operative term used in Trinh's statement was that talks "will" follow a halt rather than "could" occur, as mentioned in previous proclamations. The statement, however, was not a radical departure from Hanoi's past intransigence. In a news conference of January 4, 1968, Secretary of State Rusk admitted that the "use of the word 'will' instead of 'could' or 'would' seems to be a new formulation of that particular point, but that leaves a great many questions still open." He noted that the sincerity of the Hanoi regime was suspected in light of the fact that the North Vietnamese ordered an offensive for the winter season and already violated the holiday truces. See Department of State *Bulletin*, January 22, 1968, pages 116–124. President Nguyen Van Thieu stated that he "saw no real change" in the North Vietnamese Foreign Minister's formulation for peace. (Telegram 14927 from Saigon, January 3, 1968; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL US–VIET S) The Consulate in Hong Kong, the primary post for "China-watching" by the U.S. Government, described the Trinh statement as "a flat contradiction" of Peking's position on Vietnam and thus a reflection of the policy differences between the North Vietnamese and the Chinese. (Telegram 3774 from Hong Kong, January 3, 1968; *ibid.*, POL 27 VIET S)

452. Telegram From the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker) to the President's Special Assistant (Rostow), Secretary of State Rusk, Secretary of Defense McNamara, and Director of Central Intelligence Helms¹

Saigon, December 31, 1967, 0949Z.

CAS 747. Ref: Saigon 716.² Following additional information obtained from debriefing of Buttercup/2:

A. Although Sau Ha was warmly received and greeted by Anh Ba and Tan Duc,³ he was scorned by both for his lack of discretion and carelessness which resulted in his arrest (August) by the police. When B/2 was asked what disciplinary or punitive action Sau Ha could expect from the Front, B/2 stated that Sau Ha would most likely be purged from the party, either permanently or temporarily, and that Sau Ha would not be entrusted with any significant tasks or classified information in the future. Anh Ba related to B/2 a previous comment by B/1 that Sau Ha will be "writing newspaper articles."

B. B/2 and Sau Ha were both strongly rebuked for the manner in which they sought re-entry to the Dau Tieng U.S. military installation on 19 December (their reference to being on a POW exchange mission) when attempting to recontact CAS Saigon. They were told that both the American and Front sides were making serious effort to keep this operation as secret as possible and that they would have been much wiser to have stated simply that they were "CIA agents from Saigon".

C. B/2 was similarly rebuked for giving information about the Buttercup operation to a police lieutenant (Bach) when the latter ap-

¹ Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–7 VIET S/BUTTERCUP. Secret; Immediate; Nodis; Buttercup; Exclusive; Via CAS Channels. Received at 6:24 a.m. In telegram CAP 671267, December 31, Rostow reported to the President: "Buttercup/2 is back in Saigon having delivered Sau Ha and our message. He returns North on January 5 for meeting with higher official. Other side requests dispatch of Buttercup/1's wife to Phnom Penh. They are surprised and pleased that we overcame difficulties in responding to their initiative. Channel is, therefore, still open." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Buttercup Vol. I (A)) Tong and Mai Thi Vang were released on January 5 and successfully made their way into VC-held territory. Tong returned to Saigon on January 20, having been instructed by Dang and his secretary to do so in order to be in contact with the Americans should COSVN decide upon an exchange of prisoners. The text of Tong's written report given to the CIA Station is in telegram CAS 7321 from Saigon, January 23; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–7 VIET S/BUTTERCUP.

² In telegram CAS 716 from Saigon, December 30, Bunker related the difficulties that Sau Ha and Tong faced traveling back to COSVN in Cambodia and that Tong faced in returning to Saigon. (Ibid.)

³ Dang's secretary and Director of National Liberation Front Radio, respectively.

proached B/2 in a coffee stand in Saigon in late November. (*Comment:* This lieutenant was B/2's chief inquisitor during B/2's incarceration.) B/2 was again reminded that both the Front and Americans were trying to maintain secrecy and that too many GVN personnel already knew too much.

D. Anh Ba and Tan Duc told B/2 that they desired to have Madame B/1 moved from Saigon as soon as possible. Admittedly this was without the concurrence of B/1. They then asked B/2 to return to Saigon and "further impose" on the American side for another act of "good will" that of delivering Madame B/1 to Phnom Penh. They told B/2 that, although such delivery would be very helpful and much appreciated, this is a request only, i.e., if it is not possible for the American side to fulfill this request, B/2 should proceed alone to the arranged rendezvous at Dong Lon on 5 January and the details for the delivery of Madame B/1 to the zone can be worked out later between B/1 and B/2. Nonetheless, they expressed a strong desire that Madame B/1 be delivered to Phnom Penh and said this would be greatly appreciated by the Front.

E. During the course of the oral report to Anh Ba and Tan Duc on the night of 24 December, Sau Ha mentioned that Madame B/1 was confined to a "cachot" approximately up to the date of her release from prison. B/2 was told that B/1 will surely become very irritated to hear this in light of his request for better treatment of prisoners made two months ago. B/2 was directed by Anh Ba to tell the Americans that they recognized the difficulties of coordination between the Americans and the GVN to obtain better treatment for the POW's. Anh Ba further instructed B/1 to recommend in strong terms to the Americans that they continue to try to influence the GVN to give better treatment, including medical care, to VC prisoners, especially for those whom B/1 named in his message. Anh Ba stated that this point is very important; he cited Madame B/1's poor physical condition and inability to travel at the time of her release as an illustration of the need for improved treatment. This would eliminate the problem of being faced with "a Madame B/1 situation" each time a prisoner is released.

F. B/2 was asked if, during the course of their conversations with Anh Ba and Tan Duc, either had stated or implied that the release of Madame B/1 would cause embarrassment for B/1. B/2 replied that although no such statements were made by either per se, Anh Ba commented that though B/1 was concerned about Madame B/1's release, he was much more concerned about the release of more senior-level and more deserving cadre, such as Madame Le Thi Rieng and Chin K.

G. B/2 reported that his return trip to Saigon was slightly delayed on the afternoon of 29 December by a mining incident which overturned a bus and killed a number of people on National Highway One

slightly north of Phuoc Hiep. B/2 said that traffic was backed up on both sides of the mining incident, and he alighted from the car shuttle and walked around the congestion to pick up a three-wheeled Lambretta and proceeded to Saigon.

H. B/2 reported that when he returned home evening 29th December he learned from his wife that she and their house had been under close and constant surveillance throughout period of B/2's absence. This had become some sort of a "joke" in the neighborhood as the local kids were pointing at policeman disguised as ice cream salesman etc. and telling everyone within earshot that the ice cream man was actually a cop. B/2 reported that morning of 30th December, en route from his home to place telephone call to his [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] that he was clearly under surveillance; however neither B/2 (nor [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*]) noted any surveillance at vehicular pickup site an hour after B/2 had made his call. B/2 again pointed out that he does not mind being surveilled as much as he is concerned that his neighbors will put two and two together and come up with approximate story relating to his operational role in Buttercup operation and his relationship with the "infamous" Sau Ha.

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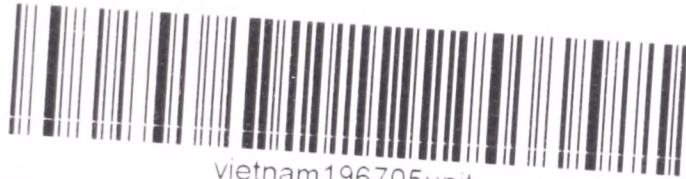


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